

Fourth year assistant professor at liberal arts/MS state university

Be aware that postdoctoral research only partially prepares you for managing a laboratory. Coming out of a postdoc, teaching is fairly novel for most of us. Generating an entire course from scratch is likely something 90% of postdocs have not done. This generally leads to a very helpful sense of ignorance, and new faculty are often eager to pick their senior colleagues brains for teaching advice, to ask for syllabi or even lecture slides, to review the notes they took from their own genetics class 8 years earlier, etc. Although I was brimming with ideas and inspiration, and had taken a college class in how to teach a college class, I did not delude myself into thinking that I had a clue what I was really doing in the classroom. This lead in my case, and I suspect often leads, to an aggressive effort to learn, to refine skills, to try new things, to discard unfounded assumptions. Motivated and introspective new faculty should observe the quality of their teaching increase dramatically following their initial forays into the classroom.

There is little intellectually demanding or counterintuitive about ones' service obligations. In the realm of committee assignments, conscientiousness and thoughtfulness likely always count for more than experience or command of Robert's Rules. Service is a time commitment, but generally not a challenge.

In the midst of all the novelty a beginning faculty member must confront, pursuing one's research may feel like a comfortable, safe haven. Running experiments and writing papers is familiar, well within the zone of confidence. You know vastly more about your specific area of research than even your closest colleague. It may be easy to default to the assumption that here at least, at the bench and authoring proposals, we know what we are doing. This assumption may be substantially in error. You are no longer merely doing research. You are now charged with running a research program. The quicker you come to terms with the practical implications of this distinction, the sooner you will feel your feet solidly underneath you. If you fail to deviate from the patterns and rhythms of benchwork that you developed as a graduate student and refined as a postdoc, you are likely to run into trouble and to wonder why the effort and enthusiasm that earlier propelled your work now has you floundering. To be certain, the specific demands of research will vary widely from one institution to another, across the spectrum from undergraduate college to research university. Nowhere are strategies that work well for postdocs likely to be equally applicable to a faculty position. The stakes have been raised and your available time allotment has shrunk. Your personnel success or failure now impacts the development of every member of your research group. The problem of resource allocation, both material and temporal, is much more complex. You must now direct the efforts of your lab members as much or more than you concern yourself with your own experiments. To see success in your science, you have to cultivate an environment and a culture. Your ability to attract and retain bright and motivated students may have as much impact on your success as your ability to design and execute a properly controlled experiment. Understand at the outset that your postdoc may have done little to give you firsthand preparation for managing a program rather than a project, and be as proactive in developing your skills running a lab as you are developing your skills delivering a lecture.

Advice from the field: Thriving as a faculty member from the first year and beyond...

Don't be a wallflower. Open your mouth. Inexperience is not incompetence, and eluctance to voice your opinions with your colleagues for fear that they may not be as well formed or grounded as those of the tenured faculty, impedes your functioning as a productive faculty member. Occasionally revealing a slight naivete is not likely to diminish your standing among your fellow faculty, but persistent reticence might.

20+ year professor at a large state research university

- 1) First proposals out of the gate. Because of the emphasis placed on collaboration and big money in contemporary science I think junior faculty should be advised of a couple of potential pitfalls in their initial efforts to obtain funding for their research. The first is to apply for grants that are too big in scope and involve too many other people. I have seen junior faculty put a lot of effort into such proposals and then have them repeatedly declined in part because they have not yet clearly established a personal track record of getting and effectively using grants. Another potential pitfall is to sign on to several grants as a co-PI (not the lead) or subcontractor. If the grants get funded this is nice, but there is a risk when going up for tenure of having a funding record that does not show clear evidence of leadership. Keep initial proposal reasonable in scope and choose your collaborations and collaborators carefully.

- 2) Student-centered teaching. There is no question that development of courses you have not taught before is time consuming and it is easy to fall from the outset into the rut of straight lecturing from Powerpoint slides without student-centered practices. I would encourage junior faculty to engage in active, student-centered pedagogy ("scientific teaching") from the outset. With a little effort, it is relatively easy to keep abreast of and implement contemporary pedagogical practices in the classroom and teaching lab. Most campuses have all sorts of resources available to help with this now. Make their use and the practices they promulgate a habit from day one. This is a sure way to stand out at tenure review time.

First year tenure track assistant professor at a large state research university

My initial (naïve) impression upon recently joining the faculty at a large research university is that the skills essential to success as a postdoc at a research institute like NESCent or NCEAS are similar to those required as a professor. These skills include managing independent research, crafting funding proposals, interacting and developing collaborations with a diverse group of colleagues, and taking initiative in maintaining research productivity. The experience I gained interacting with other postdocs and working groups has been helpful in interacting with departmental colleagues and developing new collaborations.

My strategy has been to efficiently manage the additional demands on my time (teaching, service, inquiries from students, and setting up a lab) to keep my daily schedule as close to that during my time as an independent postdoc as possible. Learning to say no has proved important. I plan to follow advice to set strict limits on the amount of time spent preparing for classes, keeping in mind that improvements in teaching over time are often assessed.

More broadly, I am following advice that one should not do anything to achieve tenure that is different from what one would do to be successful in research. I have been expanding my time horizon from that of a postdoctoral fellowship to that of an assistant professorship. With additional time demands, it seems important to ensure that I am working on a spectrum of projects that differ in time frame and ambition.

Essentially, I think NESCent postdocs should feel confident that they have already developed the skills essential to transitioning to a faculty position.

6th year assistant professor at large state research university

1. Publish, publish
2. Recruit students (my university had no money for this, and I could not use startup for any personnel!)
3. Be careful what students you bring in (very careful!...some can be a complete nightmare and take a tremendous amount of energy)
4. Be aggressive with grant submissions (i.e. submit many grants, but strive for quality)
5. Do something unique...be passionate (I think being an academic is about service and teaching in addition to research. Thus, I committed a lot of time to developing service learning in my classes, and this was formally recognized. Also, I think students should be more immersed in "evolution", and I helped organize a public lecture series to deal with this.)
6. Don't be afraid to be a voice in your department (I pushed to have the course "evolution" as a core course in the major. This was unanimously accepted. People respect you for being independent and a leader, even at a young and untenured age.)
7. Serve your department, college/university, profession, etc. (Everyone will tell you to be careful about how much service you do...if you can do it, then do it...it's important.)
8. Be careful of other's advice and use your gifts.... if you're in academia for the higher-good, then strive for that. It's important to publish a lot of papers, but being a good person and helping educate the electorate is also important and your job! Being in academia is a pure joy, and you are making a difference to science and humanity...take it seriously!

15+ year professor and chair at liberal arts college with strong math/science focus

The most important goal for most early faculty members is to do what it takes to get tenure. I've noticed that young faculty often get mixed messages about what is most important. For example, it is easy to get the impression that college or departmental service (e.g., committee work, outreach) is very important, because this often gets a lot of publicity. However, at my institution (small college) service is less important than teaching and research. While your institution may not provide a specific formula for how teaching, research and service are weighted, you can probably get a pretty good idea by talking to members of the promotion and tenure committee, or to departmental colleagues.

In practical terms, you can accept committee assignments and do a responsible job, but it you are unlikely to benefit from volunteering for lot of extra service work. I would also recommend not getting too involved with service commitments to professional societies before you get tenure.

With respect to teaching, student evaluations are likely to be very important, especially at small undergraduate colleges. Departments (and tenure/promotion committees) like to see improvement in evaluations. So if your student evaluations consistently mention a particular thing that could be improved, it's a good idea to listen to those. For example, suppose that you are trying some new teaching method that you believe is better than a conventional method. If the students clearly do not like this method, then you need to change, even if you strongly belief in this method (idealistically). It may be helpful to think of your teaching methods as experiments, and your feedback (student performance and evaluations) as data. One you get tenure, you can try out radical teaching experiments for the rest of your career.

In my experience, students value organization and clarity of your expectations, irrespective of the material or the difficulty of the class. So if your syllabus and lectures are well-organized, and you are clear about your expectations for performance, students will have a much better experience in your course, and this will be reflected in your evaluations.

Your department may or may not have a mentoring system in place. If not, feel free to ask a senior colleague to sit in on one of your classes. You might learn something very valuable this way. For example, when you ask the class a question, do you wait long enough for them to answer, or do you quickly give your own answer? Do you make eye contact with everyone in the room? (Or at least with every region of a large room?) Are your visual aids legible? Often, these can be too cluttered, or use fonts that are too small for the size of the room.

It will be important for you to figure out the student learning culture at your institution. For example, at my college students are most likely to learn the subject if they are given frequent assignments (problem sets). We can't count on them to read the textbook over

the course of the semester and then just take the exams; although they are very bright, they have too many other discrete assignments in other classes, so textbook reading is their last priority (and therefore does not get done). Although idealistically we would like students to develop the skills and discipline to learn biology by reading their text, the reality is that they do not perform well (as a group) in this way. On the other hand, they will work hard on problem sets. So figure out your student culture, and try to work with it, rather than going against the grain.

With respect to research, be sure that you understand your institution's expectations. If you teach at a small undergraduate college, there might be a prevailing notion that the most important consideration is that you provide research experiences for undergraduates. While this may be highly valued, do not abandon your own research program in favor of little undergraduate projects. Ideally, you will want to involve them in your own high-level projects. At my institution, it is more important to establish your own research program, ideally growing well beyond your Ph.D. and postdoctoral work, than it is to involve undergrads. Here, you would not get tenure if you had not published new work, even if you had provided research experiences for 20 undergraduates. On the other hand, publishing 4 or 5 papers in well-respected journals (including work that was done after your postdoc) should get you above the bar, even if you have no undergraduate co-authors. But the research requirements for tenure could be very different at another institution. Again, your best sources of information are your departmental colleagues and members of the promotion and tenure committee.

Try to get your postdoc and PhD work submitted for publication as soon as you can. During your first year you will probably have a lighter teaching load, so take advantage of the opportunity.

It can be hard to sustain a research program at a small college because you may not have any local colleagues in your field, and you do not usually have grad students or postdocs. One strategy that I have sometimes used is to establish research collaborations with faculty and graduate student colleagues at other institutions. This can help you stay current, and also provide motivation to keep research and publications going. This is likely to be more important later in your career; for the first several years, you will probably still have lots of work to finish up with collaborators from your graduate and postdoc projects.

Advice from the field: Thriving as a faculty member from the first year and beyond...

8+ year associate professor at large state research university

- 1) Devote at least some time to WRITING every day.
- 2) BEFRIEND your departmental support staff.
- 3) Be VERY ORGANIZED about (a) financial accounts and (b) recording the details of every little accomplishment that you will want to keep track of for promotions.
- 4) Establish a good professional relationship with a MENTOR in your department (one who is frank and knows the institutional ropes).

15+ year professor/assistant chair at large state research university

- 1.) Be tough on your initial negotiations for salary, start-up, and space. They will never love you again like they do at the beginning (especially strong advice for women, they tend to think this is not something they should do). Ask your friends about what they got as a comparison, and make sure what you get is competitive.
- 2.) Get an agreement about your teaching assignments. Each course when you begin it will take 8 hours per lecture to prepare, and about 1 hour per lecture to update. If you keep being assigned new courses you will be overwhelmed by this. Research I universities have teaching loads of about 1.5 to 2 course per year, so you can gauge from here. Also, if you can get all of your teaching assigned to one semester, do it. This will be especially important if you have an exotic field site with a distinct season that could overlap/interfere with other duties.
- 3.) Take an hour before each lecture to get your head into the role of teacher. It's much like an actor preparing to go on stage: going in as the frazzled overworked young professor will make it less fun, will hurt your teaching evaluations, and will damage your students. Do not forget to smile at your students.....
- 3a.) Take advantage of professional development for teachers programs at your university or college. Good teachers are made much more than born, and the push toward experiential teaching styles is not only new and unfamiliar to most, it's better.
- 4.) Have your students complete their teaching evaluations during the second-to-last week of classes. During the last week of class those hopeless individuals who have been blowing off class the whole term will show up in a desperate ploy to pick up enough to avoid flunking. They blame you for this, they will make you pay.
- 5.) Volunteer for as little service as your Chair will allow you. This is no time to become a stalwart member of the faculty council! On the other hand, you do want to get to know how the place runs, so you should do at least some of this stuff.
- 6.) If you are given time off from teaching to get started, take the time in your second year. The first year you can more profitably use the time getting your lectures going, and getting your lab actually set up (buying stuff really takes a lot of time, and is generally the more mindless stuff that can fill in between teaching gigs). Having time to do research when the lab is not ready is a waste. The burst of productivity later when the lab is fully armed and operational will help you move toward tenure more easily.
- 7.) Get funding, and look as many different places as you can. Funding your research is a process, not an event, and there are many ways to stimulate and leverage your research ideas, even in small ways, that can over time develop into a whole research program. The big NSF or NIH grant may be a goal, but that eventuality is a point along a line of scientific thinking and development of a research program. Most universities have small grants to help young faculty get going in new directions.

8.) Be wary of collaborations with older faculty. You are meant to be an independent researcher, but I have been in places where the oldsters expect the youngsters to make them famous. Take care to make sure it's really a collaboration, and not just you providing service and expertise to someone who can hold it over your head.

9.) Get some graduate students (2 or 3), or even better, a post-doc. The synergy with other young people will be worth it.

10.) Work at least 60 hours per week. More than that probably has diminishing returns for most of us.

11.) If you're going to reproduce, make sure you have a partner who really understands the deal here. Juggling all of this with a good partner is fun. Also, babies are little for a very short period of time relative to their whole lifespan, so be sure to take some time to enjoy the little bundle of joy.

12.) Find buddies with whom you can have lunch or coffee on a regular basis, on a professional level, even if they are in a different department or program.

13.) Attend annual meetings, but not so many that you're spending all of your time gadding about rather than getting your papers written and your grants submitted. Probably two a year is more than enough.

14.) Do not turn down ANY opportunities to review for peer-journals or granting agencies. Avoid doing textbook reviews (you'll get asked), they take a lot of time and you won't get that much out of it (not even \$), unless you're really into developing the pedagogical side of your career.

8+ year associate professor at mid-size state university

- 1) Don't spend too much time on preparing your new courses. Use an optimality approach. At some point, the costs of investing time in teaching outweigh the benefits. Consider being just good enough at first. Then increase the quality of your courses a little each year.
- 2) Wrap up all papers from your graduate and postdoc research in your first year. This is huge! Most schools will want to see evidence that you are publishing work done in your new lab. Don't let unfinished business drag you down.
- 3) Write as many grant proposals as you have time to write well. Most of these will be rejected, but you cannot be funded without trying. So you have to balance proposal quantity quality tradeoff.
- 4) Tips for Successful in Publishing for Tenure-track Faculty
 - I. Plan your publications carefully:
 - A. Be goal oriented; make short-, mid-, and long-term goals.
 - Find out what level of productivity your department expects
 - Set your goals higher than your department's minimal requirements
 - B. Write many different kinds of papers.
 - Grant proposal can be converted into review papers with a little extra effort
 - Comments and opinions papers can be written quickly
 - Meta-analyses can be published without collecting original data
 - C. Collaborate with other successful researchers.
 - Be sure you can depend on your collaborator
 - Discuss authorship at an early stage
 - II. Make effective use of your time for writing:
 - A. Discover the time of day that you think clearest; keep that time free for writing.
 - Writing is thinking; if you thinking is muddled, your writing will be muddled.
 - B. Tailor your work environment for productivity
 - Use a convenient system to store and access information
 - Maintain an atmosphere that stimulates you
 - C. Design multiple ongoing projects.
 - Some projects will get stalled from time to time
 - By having several active projects, you can make some progress every day.
 - D. Learn to write well on the first draft.
 - Good writing will enable reviewers to focus on your ideas
 - You will save time revising manuscripts for resubmission
 - Read *Style* by Joe Williams. It's the best book on writing I have ever seen.

III. Maximize your time for writing:

A. Limit your investment in teaching and service

- Try to find the minimal effort needed to earn good teaching evaluations
- Teach the same courses as often as possible to limit new course preparations.
- Set reasonable goals for course development, and don't try to exceed them.
- Provide service when needed, but learn how to say no.

B. Use bibliographic software (e.g., Endnote)

- Most references can be imported automatically from databases.

20+ year professor & textbook author at small, private liberal arts college

1. Have a sense of humor.
2. Make your office and lab your own. Act like you plan to stay forever. After all, you are going to be spending a lot of time in your office and laboratory. Make them comfortable. Put up artwork, put up posters. Make your laboratory a Temple of Evolution.
3. Get students involved immediately. Be excited about your work. So excited that the students may think that it can be something they can be excited about. Stress the large issues that they might not be able to see. For instance, if one is working on the developmental origin of the turtle scute (something most students won't care much about), emphasize the evolutionary aspects of scales, feathers, and hair, and how the developmental pathways may be homologous.
4. Be kind and respectful. The administrative assistants, technicians, and staff have been there longer than you and know many things you don't. Enjoy their company as you would the company of other faculty.
5. Don't be pre-med advisor. Any other faculty committee is more acceptable.
6. Find common outside interests with other faculty. Most of my good friends are those faculty whose kids went to the same day care center as ours. I'd see them when I went to this day care center. Other faculty have friends whose interests center around music or a reading group.
7. For people going to research institutions: Kathryn Tosney notes that when you are writing your first paper from a new place, don't put your postdoc advisor's name on it if possible. The tenure and promotion committee won't see it as "original" research. Similarly, she notes that many tenure and promotion committees are still more impressed by number of papers than length of papers. It's better, she says, to have three short papers than one masterpiece. Another thing from Kathryn's talk: Most universities really don't care that much about "community service." They really want you to get grants. Writing a grant application your first year is probably not a bad idea.
8. At teaching institutions, planning and time management is critical. Some weeks, you will be up nearly all night writing lectures. Have laboratories all ready to go. Know how to do the labs. Students hate wasting time in labs and for good reason. It's good to have done the labs before the students come in. Have handouts for them, too. Check your syllabus with someone who's been teaching for a while. It is helpful for comments not only on the contents of your course but on whether it might be too easy or too difficult for them.
9. Have a sense of humor. You will be asked to do far more than is humanly possible.

Advice from the field: Thriving as a faculty member from the first year and beyond...

15+ year professor at a MS-granting state university

Get lab set up.

Start a new research project, even if it is a small one. Faculty will want to see that new colleagues are doing research in their department, as opposed to continuing research projects established elsewhere.

Get a few students into the lab.

Write and submit papers

Given the economy, spend startup money quickly before it is taken away. (This assumes that one is given startup \$!!)

Don't get hung up on teaching the BEST course possible. This will come with repetition.

Try to avoid having to teach a new course every semester.

For female faculty: try to avoid male chauvinist colleagues, but be cordial. The counterpart holds true for male faculty (although I have not personally observed this kind of problem.) Document inappropriate advances, in case the documentation is ever needed to protect yourself. (I'm guessing that such problems are much less likely to happen now than a couple of decades ago. I sure hope so!)

15+ year professor at a major state research university

1. Learn to say no, politely. Don't over-commit. Avoid committees in your first year (and after that, avoid them except perhaps grad admissions and faculty searches in your field).
2. Multitasking: divide and conquer. You no longer have the luxury of devoting all your time to one thing (at least until your first sabbatical.) Schedule and carve out time each week and month for each of your main activities (teaching, research, proposals, papers, collaborations), and don't let one activity bleed into everything else.
3. Get your research started, and keep publishing. Have a three-year plan that will produce new publishable research by the third year.
4. Become a valued colleague. Interact with your fellow faculty and grad students. Explore potential collaborations that complement and extend your own research. Be a team player-- only hyper-productive new faculty can afford to be jerks or grumps-- and contribute to the positive atmosphere of your department.

5th year associate (not yet tenured) professor at Ivy League university

First priority is a grant. Show up with a grant ready to submit.

Keep a tenure folder handy. Put everything good that happens to you in it.

Timing: First year off is great. If you have to teach, first vs. second semester? Each has advantages and disadvantages. First semester off you can get your lab setup, although you will be waiting for some things, and can get going on research. Second semester off, you get teaching under your belt and are ordering equipment and supplies to set up; your lab should be ready to go at start of second semester.

Setting up the lab: Negotiation to purchase equipment takes more time than you think. You will make mistakes in setting up your lab, e.g., bad brands, buy stuff you don't use, etc. Just let it go.... Figure 10% of your startup funds will be wasted.

Teaching: Teach well, but don't worry about being outstanding. Be satisfied with enough; a lecture that is great after eight hours presentation was probably pretty good at four hours; maybe that should be good enough for now. On the first day of class, have ready your first three to five "perfect" lectures to get you in the groove. After that, start work on tomorrow's class the night before, so the time available is finite. Next year, perfect the next three to five before class starts. Immediately after each lecture, take notes about how you would change it.

Be picky about your students. Your first student will be with you for full tenure process, so you must be sure that is a good person who makes strong progress. Do not in any way count on students for papers that you need for tenure; this is your responsibility. Invest in technician to do the work, don't expect students to do it. If they do, then it is a bonus..

Regarding service. do minimum. Say no often. Do make sure you do your fair share, but not more. Guest lectures are good opportunities to be a good citizen.

Don't travel too much.

Go to faculty meetings.

Associate Dean at Community College

Focus on teaching quality, that's the most important thing in the first year.

Get to know your academic peers by attending department and division meetings. Participate in those meetings: let people get to know you, don't just sit back and be quiet if you have a constructive opinion (don't wait until tenure to be the faculty member you want to be).

Don't let the teaching eat you alive: set some boundaries for you students. (This is especially a concern in online classes where students actually complain to me, the dean, if the faculty member doesn't get back to them within a few hours, even in the middle of the night on a weekend).

Get to know what the college committees do, so that when it comes time to do college service, you can volunteer according to your interests and affinities.

Let your chair and dean know early when you have difficulties, as their job is to help you succeed, and they can help prevent small difficulties from becoming big ones.

20+ year professor and chair at a large state research university

If you have a free term to get settled, followed by a term of teaching for the first time, consider teaching the first quarter and having the 2nd quarter off! If you use the first term to order equipment, it will arrive just in time for teaching -- and it will sit until summer. Better to blow off the first term (teach & order key equipment), and then have the 2nd term + summer to get up and running.

Getting grad students into the lab takes time, so strongly consider bringing in undergrads to help on projects. This helps you get started, and it looks good.

Try to settle in on a stable teaching set of assignments. Avoid changing courses if at all possible.

Do your part, but no more -- until you get tenure. (N.B. there are always exceptions.)

Ask for advice! Senior faculty will assume that you arrive knowing how everything works at the university, or that you will somehow learn by osmosis. Don't be shy about asking simple questions (how to get reimbursed for X). Often the staff can be a great help.

Be nice to the staff. You absolutely depend on them as partners.

Listen and learn from other faculty at faculty meetings (and committee meetings). Some things you hear you will not want to learn, but occasionally you'll hear wisdom.

Take care of your family. Moving to a new city is disruptive to family, especially with the pressures on young faculty members. That is all the more reason to spend time with them.

Take vacations. Even a short weekend trip after a stint of teaching is remarkably refreshing.

Start applying for grants early. If you can even submit before officially taking an appointment, so much the better. Senior faculty will be impressed, even if your first application is turned down.

Learn how to say no gracefully. In my 2nd year I was asked to chair a college committee -- would have been really dull, and a waste of time. I said something to the effect that I would be honored to serve, but that my highest priority had to be getting grants and papers out so I could get tenure. Most senior faculty won't push under those circumstances.

6th year associate professor at 1 major state research university

1. BEFORE YEAR 1: a) negotiate for some teaching release time, b) periodically remind your chair that you have this, and c) use it in a way that benefits you the most (don't let the department convince you that its best to get release from an easy grad class you have taught before instead of the 300 student lab course that you are dreading).
2. Negotiate for a teaching schedule that is relatively constant for the first few years, so you are not constantly starting classes from scratch
3. 3. Do not start prepping your lectures too early in the process, and if you have not taught much before, keep reminding yourself that a lecture is not the same as an invited presentation. Lecture prep will eat up every bit of time you give it, so be reasonable, and make sure to allocate enough time for grant writing and paper writing. Once I have taught a class once, I generally don't start lecture prep for a class until the morning of the lecture (but I do get up quite early to do this...)
4. Be collaborative (within and outside the department). Isolation is a bad thing pre-tenure. If you are actively collaborating with folks, you will have more access to good letters of rec. for your tenure process, and if those folks are in your department, they will understand what you do, and will be better able to represent you come tenure.
5. Select a couple of outstanding students, and make sure THEY contribute to the department. Selecting graduate students is tricky - do not take chances with the students you let in year 1 and 2 - they are representing your lab, and, by extension, you, so you want bright students who are TEAM PLAYERS who will interact and collaborate with other students and professors. You will get to know other professors through their students more rapidly and more effectively than any other way...the flip side is that other professors will get to know you through your students. Make sure that is a positive experience.
6. "If after 30 minutes playing poker, if you don't know who the Patsy at the table is, you are the Patsy" (Warren Buffett). Don't be the Patsy at faculty meetings. Figure out who in the department carries weight and who does not. As much as we might not like to admit it, not all faculty are equal in the influence they have in the department, particularly when it comes to hiring and promotion. You don't have to change your views, but be smart about your battles and know how the power flows.
7. Start thinking about your NSF career award early (year 1) and make sure you get a teaching setup that will allow you to do this. If you don't know about career awards, find out.
8. Work on the metrics that matter: if you are in a broad department, you need a large group to understand your accomplishments -the best way to do that is make sure

you have pubs in journals they will recognize, and grants that they will consider significant. Another way to think about it: work on the most important research first, and always, until tenure, and pitch papers for top journals. You will do more rewriting of papers, but those that go, will go in places that your colleagues will recognize. Same goes for grants. More generally, your contribution to science can be summed up as the product of two functions: the importance of the question you are addressing to the scientific community and society in general, and the amount of the question you answer. So, if you work on unimportant questions, it won't matter how cool your statistics are or how convincingly you answer the question. This is important in general, but before tenure, you need to define importance in terms of the department you are hired into. If you are in a biology department and you solve a huge question in economics, you might still not get tenure (but I suppose that if that were the case, you could simply transfer to the economics department).

9. Grants: get two independent research grants initiated early, and stagger them so you can submit one in summer, another in winter. Apply often.
10. Collaborative proposals are as good as solo proposals, so work on productive collaborations. If they are good, it is relatively easy to have a grant going in every 6 months, because you are not doing all of the writing. Remember, if your collaborators are at separate institutions, you will be a PI, not a co-PI, even if you are not the lead institution (this may be inside baseball for some).
11. On collaborations: a good collaboration should magnify the number of pubs that you put out and grants you receive. You should feel comfortable putting out imperfect products to your collaborators, recognizing that a back-and-forth process will yield a strong product faster than playing handball with yourself. Cut off unproductive collaborations, nurture the good ones. They will be tenure-makers, and they will make your science a lot more fun. In the same vein, stick the following note in place where you will see them each morning when you come into your office "perfection is the enemy of progress".
12. Finally, be confident. Any department that is worth its salt will be hiring folks because they think they are fantastic, and will have no problem getting tenure. Were the clothes for the job you want. Put another way, if you have to worry about tenure, you have to worry about tenure. Don't be in that position (refer to tips 1 through 11 to avoid it!).

First year tenure track at major state research university

If you have the luxury to choose your start date, choose to arrive well before teaching begins. I arrived in March, giving me six months to get my lab up and running before teaching (or my tenure-clock began.) This also enabled me to participate in graduate student recruiting. Recruiting a good student early can really help get the ball rolling.

Decide on a strategy that is realistically in line with your priorities (and your start-up budget). You will not be able to set up a lab, do experiments, teach, write up your remaining post-doctoral research AND write grants. I have seen several strategies. Some of my first-year faculty colleagues have chosen to focus initially on writing their grants, putting less time into setting up the lab and doing new experiments. My priority has been to establish the lab, collect new data, write up papers from my postdoctoral work and delay writing grants until my second year. Trust me that if you try to do all of the things above simultaneously, you will do none well.

If you want to work in the lab, you will need to make an effort to do so. This is a priority for me and I make sure to always have a little genetics project that I am working on. I have heard that for many faculty, this activity of working in your own lab is one of the first to get dropped in exchange for paper writing and lab management. However, I have a few role models who have continued to do their own research throughout their careers.

Remember that your colleagues are your new community. Take time to arrange for coffee and lunch breaks with them. You want to establish yourself as an integral part of this new academic community as soon as possible. Your senior faculty will watch out for you and give you much good advice, if you let them. My institution has an excellent and well-structured mentoring system. If yours does, too, use it. If yours does not, work with some of your senior colleagues to design a mentoring system for yourself.

Do not begin planning for teaching too far in advance. If you are teaching a new course, it will take all of your time, regardless of how much you prepare in advance. Treat your pre-teaching time as a precious commodity and use this time to get your lab/experiments/protocols/system established and/or to write papers or grants. I began preparing for my course about 1 month in advance by choosing a book, creating a syllabus and writing my first week of lectures. Of course, once you experience that classroom for the first time, you go back and re-write all of your lectures anyways! Teaching the first time will consume you. Do not fret over this. All of your senior colleagues had the same experience. Seek out workshops for first time teachers. Also, see if you have a campus writing program to help you with designing writing assignments for students. Remember that teaching can be fun. Treat your students with respect and let them know that you believe that they can surpass your high expectations of them.

The hardest part for me has been keeping some space for new creative thinking. I find myself running a lab, keeping students on top of their research and data analysis,

Advice from the field: Thriving as a faculty member from the first year and beyond...

interacting with colleagues, traveling for invited seminars and keeping on top of my publications, but this (not surprisingly) takes all of my time. I do not have a solution to offer to you, just be mindful that you keep some time to think and play with ideas in your mind. I have started writing down ideas on index cards and posting them near my desk in some hope that when I need to come up with a new rotation project or when I just want to do a little experiment myself, I can go to this “creativity space” and find a solid idea.

Remember this is your lab and you have dreamed of what it would be like for some time. Enjoy it and make it the space you have imagined.

10+ year associate professor at primarily undergraduate state university

Teaching:

1. Get used to the idea that many students are in your classes for the wrong reasons (getting a grade), and may not be as enthusiastic as you are about the subject matter. They also may not have the maturity to realize that some things are just not fun but are necessary to master if they want to acquire the tools for a successful future. Most students put their social priorities above their academic ones.

2. You may have a variety of behavioral issues that have the potential to distract from your lectures. A few are: arriving late to class, using cell phones and having students talking in the back of the classroom. I suggest you try to head these off by spelling out in your syllabi exactly what type of behavior is acceptable in the classroom. You should also spell out the repercussion of breaking the rules of your syllabi (e.g., Late students will not be admitted to class. If student is using a cell phone they are kicked out for the day. Students talking will have their tongues removed etc....).

These issues may or may not be problems at your institution. If they are, you can consider ways to alter or attempt to minimize these behaviors before they become major distractions. For example, if tardiness is a problem, you can include in your grading criteria a small percentage of points for attendance (that won't influence their overall grade inordinately, but will get their attention). Simply tell the students that an attendance sheet will be passed around during the first few minutes of class and only those signing at that time will get attendance points. Although this encourages students to be punctual, it has the drawback of being somewhat labor intensive for you, especially if you have large or multiple classes (keeping track of students and points). In addition, there will always be students who will either beg or argue with you about the reason why they were late (valid and fictitious), which means you need to be clear about your own unified response to these appeals.

3. Talk to other faculty members about how much material to cover in a semester and what information and skills students need to acquire from your class to progress to the next class. If multiple professors are teaching the same class during the same semester (e.g., general biology), does everyone follow the same syllabus? If students in lectures and labs are not linked to the same professor, make sure to provide continuity to the labs. Watch the tempo of your lectures so you coordinate with the materials in labs (if your lectures and labs are set up to complement each other).

4. Find out how other professors grade and if you have institutional support for your grading decisions: starting with your dept. chair, the dean and on up. Depending on the level of support, you may have to adjust the standards you would like to set for yourself and your students. Also, if you are very clear in the syllabi and explain to your students exactly what they need to do to achieve whatever grade they would like and remind them during the semester, you will have fewer students (or parents) coming to you, your chair or dean with grading complaints. You can use Blackboard (or an equivalent) or

post an ongoing tally of each student's points (using an anonymous system so students recognize their own grades but not others). This also helps students know where they are at all times and eliminates their surprise when they receive a failing grade. Conversely it helps them get motivated to achieve a higher grade if they are within range.

5. Be entertaining and try novel approaches to keeping student interest. You will have your own unique approach or sense of humor. Customize your lectures and PowerPoint presentations; make them personal and exciting, as well as informative.

Community:

Serve on a range of committees from dept. to university level. This not only helps you understand how the university functions it allows you to influence potentially important decisions for the university and your career there. In addition, it gives you a chance to meet with people outside your department. This is especially important if you are in a separate building, working away in your office and generally isolated from other parts of the university.

Research:

If possible try to collaborate with other faculty members in your department.

Promotes good usage of equipment and resources

Helpful in getting more potential students involved

Adds to a feeling of cohesiveness and camaraderie in the department

Misc: University or departmental politics

It is important to be involved in positive change for your university and push for it actively. However, there will be some issues that you will feel strongly about where you will find yourself either in a minority position, or the issue will be out of your hands to change. Don't let this upset you inordinately. Take a long-term perspective. Issues that may appear to be of major importance to your happiness or future advancement now; may either not prove to be that important, or get resolved in the future in ways you didn't anticipate.

Advice from the field: Thriving as a faculty member from the first year and beyond...

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