

Words of Wisdom from Folks Who've Been There

From Shawn Starcher, Assistant Professor, Muskingum University

1. Take time for yourself to find something you like doing...and do that, especially when you are feeling burned out.
2. Make authentic connections with people at conferences. Some of them will be your best friends during your career.
3. Try to enjoy the process along the way and savor the "little wins."

From Jennifer A. Samp, Full Professor, University of Georgia

Best advice:

1. You have to learn to be arrogant. This is hard! The academic system is often set up to make you have "impostor syndrome." You are not an imposter. Do all that you can to promote yourself. Apply for school, college, and/or university awards. When you publish something, let it be known via social media.
2. Update your c.v. immediately after you get a publication, conference paper acceptance, service role, etc. Do it in the format required by your college or university for tenure and promotion. Waiting until the last minute is a nightmare. Doing it incrementally also reminds you of all that you have accomplished!
3. Make sure you get in writing what the expectations are for your position and rank. Ask for a review of these expectations every year.
4. If you are in a non TT position or "junior" TT faculty, learn early to say "no" to service beyond committing to the absolute minimum.
5. If you are in a non TT position or "junior" position work on developing and implementing a new course that shows how valuable you are to the department.
6. Ask, ask, and ask again about the expectations for publishing. Is it 2 a year? More? Are different publications ranked differently? Does a book matter in your department or is it more article-focused? Expectations vary wildly across departments and universities.

Lessons learned/ Things I wish I would have known:

1. You will get a lot of advice. Some it is helpful, some of it is designed to not help you. Trust your gut. Trying to follow what everyone else is telling you to do is going to be overwhelming and not helpful for your mental health.
2. The second you get promoted to Associate Professor, your service requests and expectations will be overwhelming. Try not to say yes to everything.

Achieving the Rank of Full Professor:

1. Know that once you achieve Associate Professor there is no "ease up time." Take on service roles as expected according to rank in your department. Different department cultures vary on what is required in terms of service for promotion to full.

2. As an Associate Professor, you need to be mindful of the timetable to promotion to full. This is not the time to necessarily branch out on a new area of research. Build upon what you have done and work on establishing yourself as a marketable commodity and one with an international reputation in a certain area of research.
3. As an Associate Professor, now is the time to hone your identity as an “expert”. No impostor syndrome. You are the expert.
4. Depending on your department culture, you will either be treated as an “old person” and discarded OR considered to be a mentor as a Full Professor. Get a sense of your department’s culture early and often.
5. Once you are promoted to Associate, apply for every regional, national, and international award call that is relevant to your work. Ask people to nominate you. Do not be embarrassed to do so. For many schools, having an international reputation is important.
6. Seek out grant opportunities that allow you to build partnerships within and across universities. A BIG part of this is thinking creatively about how your skills in health communication translate to problems and issues in other disciplines and how you can be the “communication expert” on a diverse research team. For example, Samp partnered with engineers and clinical psychologists on a funded NIH grant to examine low profile means of recording family interactions in participants’ homes.
7. Do whatever works for you to bring you joy every now and then.

From Kendal Lyssy, Graduate Student, University of North Texas

1. The most important piece of advice I can offer is to take every opportunity to network with your fellow scholars. Whether it is emailing the scholar, going to a panel the scholar is on, or having lunch or coffee with the scholar after their panel or presentation, I have found that some of my favorite times at regional and national conferences has been where I have been engaged in important conversations and networking sessions with communication scholars. Do not waste an opportunity to network. You don’t want to look back and say, “I wish I had taken the opportunity to really get to know (insert scholars here)”. Networking will serve you well in any stage of your career, and it is never too early to start.
2. As a graduate student pursuing my doctoral degree come fall, networking in the virtual environment served me well in the PHD applications process. I was not afraid to reach out to not only the directors of graduate studies at the Universities I applied to, but I also reached out to the faculty members I wanted to work with and took opportunities to network with these wonderful individuals on Zoom. I made a list of questions I wanted to ask them and had my mentors look over it religiously before I met with them. I found that at the end of the day, I had not only connected with individuals I wanted to work with in a PHD, but I found that we had a lot more in common than I realized. Knowing I could not go to NCA, I decided early on that I wanted to be able to put a voice to the name of the faculty members and DGS. Therefore, I sent emails and networked with faculty on Zoom. Immediately after our time together on Zoom, I sent each person a thank you email and told them I was excited to apply to their program. Now, I will be starting my PHD program in the fall, and am so excited. I attribute a lot of my success to networking. It is all about who you know at the end of the day.
3. At the end of the day, communication scholars are humans just like us, with likes, dislikes, interests, and everything in between. It could be because I am an extrovert to the greatest extent of the word and not afraid to use my communication skills to talk to people, but I find that when I am networking, I attempt to be relational and take the formality out of it so we can relate. I find that when I make it a goal to be relational, my fellow scholars and I can have great

conversations not only about our similar research interests and teaching endeavors, but also about other topics of interests that often do not have anything to do with academia.

4. Dress for Success. When networking with scholars, whether it is with health communication scholars or other senior scholars who have been in academia for 20 years, dressing for success shows how much you care. I always dress professionally for networking sessions, whether on Zoom or in person. It makes me sound confident and helps relax some of the networking nerves.
5. Finally, I have found that having an elevator pitch about my research helps me stay focused and on track when networking with scholars. For example, if I wanted to network with a health communication scholar, I would tailor my elevator speech to discuss my interests in health communication, even if health communication was not my primary concentration. Please do not think I am saying to tell a scholar you are interested in rhetoric if you are really interested in health communication—I'm just saying that if you are interested in family and health communication, emphasize those interests in your speech. Be specific but not too specific.

From Jenn Anderson, Associate Professor, South Dakota State University

1. *When you're on the road to tenure, prioritize research.* Set aside time. Your teaching and service obligations will get done—because they have to, there are immediate deadlines. Research won't happen unless you make it happen.
2. *Don't just meet the research criteria for tenure at your institution.* Work toward the criteria for tenure at the most demanding type of institution you could see yourself at. You might find yourself on the market again for any number of reasons—be ready!
3. *Better to beg forgiveness than to ask permission.* Do that new, innovative thing that hasn't been tried in your department. You don't need to ask permission to try new class activities, to attend a seminar on grant-writing, or to network with colleagues outside your unit.
4. *Grab coffee with anyone on campus you could see yourself collaborating with.* Interdisciplinary collaborations are not just a great idea, they are expected in many institutions. Reach out to potential collaborators directly – introduce yourself via e-mail & then have a chat!
5. *Hint: some of your best collaborators will be non-academic university staff or even community members.* There are all different types of expertise, value, respect, and invite as many of them to the table as you can.
6. *Take a mental health day (or two!).* Learn to recognize the signs of mental illness in yourself and others. Be honest about your mental health needs (whether they are mild or severe) just as you would physical health needs. Take time off or adjust your work schedule or workload to accommodate your mental health needs. Seek out resources, such as counseling, available on or off-campus.
7. *Remind yourself—often—of who you are outside of your work.* So many of us LOVE what we do and it is a huge part of our self-identity, and that's great! But you are more than the work that you do. And on days when it feels like you aren't doing enough, or you're not doing it right, or someone else is doing it better than you, or you just don't care anymore, or you're very annoyed with a coworker, or whatever... acknowledge how you are feeling and then shift your mental focus to parts of your self or your life that are not bound up with work. If you can, physically do something that embraces & enacts that non-work aspect of your identity.
8. *MOVE!* We spend so much time in our chairs, behind screens. It is so important to find some means of physical activity that you enjoy and will keep doing. It helps with so many things, not the least of which is giving you a tangible feeling of accomplishment (“I worked out today!”) that is so often lacking in our line of work.

9. *Things change.* Your colleagues, tenure & promotion standards, state education policies, and so much more. Stay up to date on changes that affect you and the university at-large. Even if you stay at the same institution your whole career, your unit, your university, and our discipline will continue to change and evolve.
10. *Take parental leave, request accommodations for breastfeeding if you choose to do so upon return to work, take advantage of any other HR policies that support your health and wellbeing.* Whether you are a man or woman, a birth or adoptive parent, or any other configuration of family welcoming a new child, you deserve to take true parental leave. That means no work should be done on your leave. Period. That's your right. Stand up for it. And if the current policies on parental leave, breastfeeding, or any other aspect of HR aren't great, use your voice to advocate for change.

From Leah Bryant, Associate Professor, DePaul University

1. Create a research syllabus with mini-deadlines (finish literature search, complete outline of warrant, submit IRB), regular deadlines (complete data collection, draft of results, etc.), and major deadlines (submit to CSCA, send to Best Journal Ever for review, etc.).
2. Positive reinforcement is great (don't ask how much weight I gained eating M&Ms whilst writing); but punishment works too. For example, I wrote a massive check that I could barely cash to an organization that I diametrically opposed and asked a trusted colleague to hold an addressed stamped envelope with that check in it, telling her that she MUST mail it if I did not provide her with proof of sending a manuscript out for review by a very specific deadline.
3. Keep a running list of possible letter writers. Did you meet someone nice here at CSCA, and do they have tenure? Add them to your list? Trying to think of possible people when you are under the stress of putting your dossier together is not idea. Have that done in advance.
4. Keep your CV on your desktop. Add things as they come up, like when you received all your acceptances for presentation here at CSCA.
5. Think about what you do, big picture, and narrate it.
6. Read your university, college, and department tenure and promotion guidelines and do not be afraid to ask clarifying questions. Additionally, you are a scholar/teacher of Communication Studies before you are a faculty member at X University/College; therefore, think strategically about how you want to craft your case. Research is more measurable than teaching and service. Be careful not to make the mistake of doing everything that is asked of you and hope to get promoted based upon being a good sport, if the other 2 parts have suffered. Most people don't retire from where they were first hired.

From Sydney O'Shay, Assistant Professor, University of Utah

Sydney O'Shay – Words of Advice

- For whatever reason (life circumstances, demanding schedule, etc.), you may not always be able to submit your absolute best work, remember that it is okay to submit things that are 'good enough'.
- Be kind while reviewing and giving feedback to others—whether they are your students or blinded authors. Speak and write to others as you would have them do for you.
- Learn how to say 'no'.

- Reach out to your academic rock stars early on and establish a relationship. You may be surprised at how approachable and invested they are in the future of the discipline (you!).
- Be purposeful about establishing distinct boundaries between work and personal life to protect your overall wellbeing.
- When you set goals, identify the path you need to take to achieve those goals. Be specific in outlining the steps you must take to achieve your goal to make it less abstract and more concrete.
- Well before you go on the job market (academic or alt-ac), identify potential careers that you would like to pursue and ensure you are making yourself marketable for these positions early on. For example, if you want to work for a public health department, you may want to take a few public health courses or get a graduate certificate in public health to go along with your PhD.