Foundation Workshop: Roadmap for Early Career Faculty

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Guiding questions

- What process did I take to prepare the limited submission proposal to UMD for the Packard nomination?

- What process did I take to prepare the actual Packard proposal?

- What insight have I gained by being a part of a Packard Scholars cohort?

- What have I learned about working with Foundations that I did not know before and wish I had known?

Identify opportunities

- I heard about Packard from a colleague who had applied (unsuccessfully).

- Now we have the Chandrika (C&FR) so use/help her:
  - Tell her about your ideas and what resources you need to make them happen
  - Tell her about your accomplishments

- Division of Research compiles list of many opportunities; keep track of deadlines and get started early.

- As a University, our track record with Packard Foundation (probably others, too) does not represent the quality of our early career faculty → We are probably doing something wrong…

Investing in a Person

- **Foundations want to be associated with success; we are their "bling"**

- Find a mentor! Interact with mentor! Ask questions / insist on answers. If your mentor is not meeting your needs, find another.

- Raise your visibility
  - Attend conferences, workshops
  - Suggest to give talks at institutions (don't wait to be invited) and tailor them to the audience

- Ask to be nominated for awards! Keep track of them
  - People (especially those you want to nominate you) are busy and no matter how much they care about you, they might forget / not get organized in time.

- Think about references ahead of time
  - High impact (NAS members)
  - High knowledge (Not just advisors, but also editors, etc.)

Investing in an Idea

- In my experience, Foundations are not like NSF
  - Investing in person, not how likely a project is to succeed
  - Want return out of proportion with investment
  - At least for Packard – take risks and shoot for big impact!

- Why now? – timing is key.

- One theme is that Packard funds research that is enabled by some megaproject, like major telescope, technological breakthrough, etc. → increases impact inexpensively by piggybacking on major enterprises.

- Reach out across departments to build a team that can really do something new
  - Write a one-pager and reach out to foundations through C&FR

Effective Communication

- Start writing early!

- Write for a scientist not in your department but in a tangentially related department
  - Physicist should write for a chemist or biologist (do not assume prior knowledge)
  - Chance of having a sub-field expert on panel is small
  - Illustrate your idea / project
  - Make sure you get your excitement across (and if there is no excitement, come up with something exciting, even if it is likely to fail)

- Ask colleagues and mentor(s) to read / edit

- Accept and incorporate criticism

- Get professional help

Answers …

■ What process did you take to prepare the limited submission proposal to UMD for the Packard nomination?

   ■ Tried three times, was rejected twice, so don't get discouraged no matter how objectively wrong the decisions may be ☺

   ■ Asked for feedback and used rejection as an opportunity for improvement

   ■ Started early, mentor edited extensively

Answers …

- What process did I take to prepare the actual Packard proposal?

  - Mentor in another department edited extensively

  - Prepared a "sexy" summary figure

  - Obtained help from professional science writer

Answers …

- What insight have you gained by being a part of a Packard Scholars cohort?
  - Without exception (!!!) all are great communicators:
    - Pitched their science to a broad scientifically-literate but non-expert audience
    - Exuded excitement and confidence
    - Consider getting trained by COMPASS or similar organization

  - Bewildering array of science is being funded, from iridescence in clam shells to large scale structure of the Universe.

  - "Only-now-possible" kind of project is common

Answers …

- What have you learned about working with Foundations that you did not know before and wish you had known?

  - A lot of people know each other (small world)

  - You don't have to work on something "trendy" – doesn't have to be climate change or bio-whatever – you just have to be able to effectively communicate why it is exciting

  - Invest in person and idea not really the project itself → lasting and out of proportion impact

  - It is OK to play up the (down-the-line) implications of your work even if you are not the one researching / applying those