**New Faculty Institute 2015 | Julie Buckler, Darren Higgins, Devah Pager**

ELIZABETH ANCARANA: Well, it's great to see everybody talking and getting to know each other. And it's a lot of energy, positive energy in the room. It's really great to see. So now we'd like to start our next faculty panel. We have three tenured faculty who are going to give some good advice on navigating your professional path as a scholar. So I'd like to introduce them now. They'll each speak again for about 10 minutes, and then we'll open it up to questions and discussion.

So I'll start with Julie Buckler, who is a professor of Slavic and comparative literature in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. She also currently holds a half-time position as the humanities director of academic ventures at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study. Julie received her doctorate in Slavic from Harvard and has spent her academic career here, appointed as a junior professor, assistant professor in 1996 and awarded tenure by the faculty of Arts and Sciences in 2003.

She works on the literature, performing arts, cultural life, and urban environments of Russia, with a focus on the imperial period and its legacies. For the past several years, Julie has also been a central member of the steering committee of the humanities project, which works to foster arts and humanities initiatives that build intellectual community and integrate the humanities into urban studies more broadly as it is practiced in the fields of urban planning, design, architecture, the social sciences, and public policy.

We have Darren Higgins, who is a professor of microbiology and immunobiology at the medical school. He holds a PhD in microbiology and immunology from the University of Michigan Medical School and completed his postdoctoral studies at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and the University of California at Berkeley. Darren came to the Harvard Medical school as an assistant professor in 1999 and was promoted to professor with tenure in 2009.

His laboratory currently focuses on understanding fundamental host pathogen interactions that lead to virulence in the development of protective immunity to intracellular bacterial pathogens. He's also the inventor on several patents and co-founded and serves on the Scientific Advisory Board of Genocea Biosciences, Inc., a company that commercializes key breakthroughs in vaccine discovery and development with a focus on intracellular pathogens.

And we have a Devah Pager, who is a professor of sociology in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and a professor of public policy at the Kennedy School. She's also the Susan S. and Kenneth L. Wallach Professor at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study and the director of the Harvard Multi-Disciplinary Program in Inequality and Social Policy Devah holds a PhD from the University of Wisconsin at Madison and was a Fulbright Fellow in Paris, studying changes in crime policy and patterns of immigration and ethnic tension in contemporary France.

Her research focuses on institutions affecting racial stratification, including education, labor markets, and the criminal justice system. Her field experiments investigate racial and economic consequences of large-scale imprisonment and discrimination against minorities and ex-offenders in contemporary US labor markets. So again, welcome to our panelists. And maybe we start with Julie for some sound advice.

JULIE BUCKLER: Can you hear me? Yes? Well, welcome. Welcome to Harvard. I hope you'll be happy here and this place will be good to you.

I've been here for a really long time. I've been on the faculty since 1996, as Elizabeth said. I was hired as a freshly minted PhD, the ink on my degree not even dry, no postdoc, nothing, just dived right in. And I was tenured in 2003. And my tenure, I think, came at the beginning, in the early years of a big wave of internal promotions such that there's quite a cohort of us now who are tenured from within by support of departments and mentored by colleagues and given sound advice. And I'm very grateful to those who had helped me.

I'd like to share with you some wisdom that I have acquired in my now 19 years on the faculty here, both as a junior person and as a tenured person. And also, now being 12 years out from tenure, I feel like I've learned a few things about what it's like to be senior. And I know that this audience consists mostly of junior tenure-track faculty but that there are also some senior hires here. And welcome. And so I'm going to offer some advice to both groups since I now have some thoughts on that.

So for junior faculty, now, of course, everything I say comes from my experience in the humanities. So I apologize if some of it isn't pertinent to people in other fields. In the humanities, the old standard, the old gold standard was two books by tenure. And that's a lot in a seven-year junior appointment. But I did it, because--

SPEAKER 1: You're choking.

[LAUGHTER]

JULIE BUCKLER: And then I had to get over my post-tenure stress syndrome. I did it because it had to be done. It was made very clear to me that that was what it was going to cost me to be considered for promotion, to be considered seriously for promotion.

I think the standards are more flexible and more broadly defined now. And I think that's very positive. I kind of would have liked not to have written my second book in such a rush. But that's OK. At least I wrote it.

So my advice is this to junior faculty. The junior appointment seems like it's going to be very long, but it's actually very short. And it's really important to get control of your time. And it's really important to have a master plan.

Sit down and really give some thought to what you would like to be able to put on the table the year you come up for review. And then really think about how you're going to get there. But most of the things that you want to have to show, you're going to build up in stages. And so you need to plan the staging, plan the multiple talks, the course, the new acquaintances, the collaborators, et cetera, that are going to lead you to the publications that you want to have.

Harvard is renewing itself very much in the area of teaching. We have the Harvard Initiative for Learning and Teaching. We have HarvardX, and really good and innovative teaching is highly valued here now, as is significant service, program building and other ways of really serving what we do.

That said, your publication record is still the most important thing in your dossier. And so it's very important that you don't let it get lost in the shuffle. So look for the synergies, and then be very conscious about the decisions you make regarding the projects you invest in deeply, having educated yourself about the view that Harvard tends to take on these things.

So in my field, for example, doing an extensive translation of poems by a particular poet with a long scholarly introduction is certainly a worthy project but one that most people would probably think was better done after you were tenured. And you may decide to go ahead and do that translation project anyway as a junior person, but you should at least understand the choice that you're making. And you might get tenure, too, but just-- so let your senior colleagues tell you what the expectations are, and make your own decisions based on your own priorities.

January is now a huge boon. The academic calendar changed a few years ago, and now January for faculty is heaven, pretty much. Fall semester is over, spring semester hasn't started, and you can kind of lay low and really get some work done. It never used to be possible to get any of your own work done during the academic year, I mean, except for little bits and pieces.

So I'm just a proponent of getting your tools set in order, whatever you use, bibliographic management, presentation software. Be proactive and entrepreneurial. Organize things yourself so that you can be on the panels you want to be on. Apply for a Radcliffe exploratory seminar, run a talk series at one of the centers with a colleague. All of these can be done collaboratively, but they're all good ways to extend your reach at Harvard without overextending yourself.

And so my best piece of advice is do get out there. See if you can get an interesting service assignment or two. I was on the freshman seminar committee when the freshman seminar program expanded a lot, and it was a wonderful committee assignment, because I got to see these really wonderful proposals and syllabi from all across the university.

And I learned a lot, and I thought a lot, and we had great discussions. And I was just very happy that I agreed to be on that committee. And so you can't allow yourself to be completely bunkered in your own department. It won't be good for you here. But you also can't be running around all the time and never sitting down and getting down to business.

And for teaching preparation, I recommend top-down planning. It took me years to figure out that the best way to prepare to teach was not to read everything and take an enormous number of pages of notes so that I would feel I had mastery of the topic and then come into class. Much better to do top-down planning, really thinking about what you want to accomplish during each class, what the goals are, and kind of filling in that way, top down. That way you don't waste a minute, and you don't need to be your own best student, if you know what I mean.

So that's my best advice for junior people. Keep your head down, but not too much. Make a plan. Really make a plan and keep track of it. Keep yourself honest. Use all the tricks they talk about in business books on how to be more effective. Don't look at email for certain hours of the day, reserve one day a week to stay home and work on your own stuff if you can, et cetera.

My advice for senior faculty is somewhat different. When you're tenured, you will accrue a pretty heavy service load, because that's who can do a lot of the work-- task forces, promotion reviews, searches, chairing departments. The list goes on and on. And it's important. And when you get tenure, you kind of owe it to Harvard to pitch in on that stuff.

But you can also get buried by the work. So I've found that collaborative projects have worked really well for me during this stage in my career, because they allow me to invest in projects I really care about and to advance them because I have partners who are helping me. That's working really well for me.

I'm also really interested in nontraditional forms of scholarly output, like websites, and I'm especially enamored right now for a virtual exhibition software tool called Omeka. It's kind of a repository, and it allows students to do more than write traditional papers. It allows them to do more with design and presentation and to incorporate different media.

I find it's more engaging for students. And I also find that it's a nice and tempting format for my own scholarly production but not something I would have attempted as a junior person. So when you're senior, you have to be kind of cagey about finding ways to advance your projects while also doing the things you're supposed to do.

And other people swear by writing groups, by having trusted peers who read their work, by setting up networks, connections, commitments that are going to support you in getting your own work done. You can't just wait for, live for your next sabbatical. You can be making small deposits in your piggy bank for the four years leading up to a sabbatical. That's what I've done.

And just keep socking stuff away. Keep buying books. Keep files of things. Give the same talk several times but in different venues or from a different perspective. I mean, things take such a long time to develop, so allow that space for it to happen.

So that's my best advice. Those are my hard-won truths. I think you can really thrive and prosper here, but you have to make the institution work for you. Because it is a very fast-paced, and there's just an enormous amount going on. You have to stay grounded. So best of luck. And I mean that sincerely, not ironically. Thank you.

[LAUGHTER]

DARREN HIGGINS: I'll pick up from there. And I unfortunately didn't get a chance to see the previous session, but I think a lot of things that all the panelists will say will resonate and cross boundaries.

So I'm at the medical school. And as the intro said, I'm starting my 17th year here. And unlike the humanities, I do very little formal teaching. I was hired to come and set up a research lab and basically have productive, scholarly work in terms of papers, in terms of research development. And that was sort of my primary goal.

I also came at a time, which is, I think, less of a kinder, gentler time. And it certainly has changed. And I just want to say at the beginning, I have one theme throughout the 10 minutes I'll speak, and that's basically, don't work in a bubble. Don't work in a vacuum. And I'll try to interject kind of some practical strategies of how to actually do that and follow from what Julie said.

And I remember when I first came here as assistant professor, I was like, OK, go in and get your lab set up, and go get your R01 grants, and just go to it. And I remember sitting about three months after I showed up back in 1999, and I thought to myself, I could die in my office today. Nobody would know.

[LAUGHTER]

Nobody would care--

[LAUGHTER]

--until the smell permeated far enough down the hallway that someone said, go figure out what's going on. And I remember I had this candy dish in my office, so when people came it was like, hey, do you want to sit and have a talk and talk to me?

[LAUGHTER]

And usually it was someone saying, oh, we heard you had this piece of equipment. You don't have it. Goodbye. And so I realized at that point that working in the bubble and trying to do everything on your own isn't going to work. And I said, well, how do I get out of this?

And one of the things I'll cross to is people talk about mentorship. And I really think you have to develop multiple mentors and think of your career as if you were the general contractor of your career. And you don't have to do everything perfectly, but find the people that do things really well and lock onto those individuals to get good, sage advice.

I remember I called my graduate mentor, who was a very engaging person, who is now a dean at Michigan State. And he says, well, what you need to do is just engage the other faculty, get out there, and I know you a little bit, so just go ask them to lunch. Because everyone has to eat. And do something to break the ice.

And I remember I asked all my senior faculty to lunch, and I was very nervous. And I spoke to people. Mostly I told him about what I did a little bit. I'm doing this. OK, great. And about two months later, a student comes to my office and says, oh, I want to talk to you about rotating in your lab. I went to one of your senior colleagues, who is very well renowned, they don't have space, and they said I should come talk to you.

And I realized that person did me a favor, informed this person about what I was doing. They could use their legacy to say, hey, here's someone who you might want to talk to. That person was my first graduate student, that student, and was the first author of the first paper and helped me get my first grant. And things took off from there. So I realized very quickly you have to come out of the office, you have to engage at different levels.

The other thing to do that I think is very important, as Julie says, to keep stock of what your expectations are, how you're going to be evaluated, how you're going to be promoted, and get this sort of general-contractor group of people. So I noticed that there's faculty in my department who are phenomenal authors, their papers are always in the top journals, and so I kind of went to them and said, well, could you read my paper and give me some advice? And they would say, the science is fine, but the presentation needs some work in terms of how you have to project it to individuals so they can understand it better.

And then I realized something, that I am the best person to explain to other people what I do and why it's important and why you should promote me, why you should keep me around. But if I cannot explain that in a way that you understand, I'm doing myself a disservice. So one of the things someone told me is they said, write your own recommendation letter.

And that's a hard thing to do. But when your department chair or someone comes and says, we want to put this person up for this, or you want to apply for this, and they say I have to write this recommendation letter for this new assistant professor in my department-- who did we hire again? What is this person doing? What have they done in the last few months? And you need to be able to say exactly why that's important.

And so what you might want to do is find a colleague who has had experience with that. And there's one thing Julie says-- as you become a senior person, you sit on promotion and evaluation committees. You have this experience. Find out who in your department does that, because it's someone, and say, OK, what do I need to do? Where am I going? How can I actually get to this direction? And that's advice, too, about not working in the bubble.

One thing I would say, too, in terms of your time, in my opinion really as a Harvard professor, other than air, water, and food, your most precious commodity is time. It's a limited resource. There's only so many hours in the day, so many days in the week, and everyone is going to be jockeying for your time. And I'll come back to how to reserve your time.

So I think that what you want to get in the process of is sort of getting a schedule in terms of what time you can allot to specific things. And one thing I want to say now and come back to is the work-life, home-life balance. Many of the assistant professors, you may or may not have a partner, you may or may not have kids. At some point during the next decade that may change for you. And it's very important for you to kind of set aside time. And for

And for me, for example-- I was talking this morning-- I'm a single dad of twin daughters, and I have a set amount of time. I have a schedule. Everyone in my life knows my schedule.

They know that Mondays and Tuesday nights, I'm free to stay late, I'm free to work with you. Wednesdays and Thursdays I'm with my kids. Don't call me. I'm not going to call you back. If it's an emergency, you can text me something or send me something, but this is my allotted time. And I think that once everyone can understand that and say, hey, this is when I'm available, they will respect those boundaries.

The other thing I want to say, too, about not working in a bubble is at some point during your time here, you will have a crisis. That is life. Whether it is a death in the family or an illness or basically an accident or someone you know or something or your house burns down, there will be something that will take you away from your focus on the work that you will have to go and deal with.

And I think it's very important that you recognize that that will happen and to be very honest to the people around you and let people know what's going on in your life. You don't have to be an open book and tell everyone all your business. But what I found is I went through a few crises and issues I had to deal with, and by my department chair and my business administrator and people knowing in general this was going on, behind the scenes they kind of kept things away.

I was talking this morning-- I noticed that I wasn't getting as many emails. I wasn't getting as many people asking me to do something. Julie knows this. As one of the few African-American tenured faculty members at Harvard, I get asked to do stuff all the time. And suddenly people weren't asking me as much. And that was a blessing, because people knew what was going on in my life, and again, not working in the bubble.

Also with the promotion side, one practical thing that I would tell everyone to do is at least every quarter, every three months, update your CV. Because what's going to happen is that next year some time someone will say, hey, we want to put you up for this, or this is going on, and then you have to sit down and think about what am I actually doing. So just every time you have a calendar-- well, I gave this talk, I did this, I'm writing this article, I'm writing this book-- update your CV. And if you have nothing to put on it, if you have nothing on your calendar that is coming up, that's a sign that, hey, I need to kind of get out of the bubble and go talk some other individuals.

One strategy for researchers is that one of the criteria that you're promoted by is your recognition in the field. That comes from various ways-- publications, presentation, promotions. You may have to do some self-promotion.

So for example, some of the colleagues here at Harvard are probably world-renown in the fields that they do. You might go and say, hey, if you're on this journal, I would be willing to be on the editorial board for this journal at some point. Please consider me. If you are basically putting this conference together in three years, you should come look at the work that I'm doing and just consider me for giving this presentation.

Those little things of just saying, hey, I'm available, will often very much help you. Because we're all very busy, and at the last minute someone says, I need to do this. Back when you had cover pictures on journals, one of the colleagues in my department was the cover editor for the journal and then basically came to me and said, I saw that you had an article in this issue, and you didn't tell me. Give me something so we can put on the cover. Oh, OK. That networking aspect works. So I think that you want to be aware of what your colleagues are doing just in general, because they can avail you.

The last thing I'll say is about the tenure. When I first came here, someone said, getting tenure means being able to say no, that now I've arrived and now I can tell people no. And I think that's not the case. I think getting promotion, getting to tenure, having a successful career means being able to say no to protect your time to allow you to accomplish what you want to do.

So how do you do that? One of the things about the general contractor is to identify people that can help you. And you have to identify someone that can help you say no. So for example, for me it was my department chair. I was asked to do this, I'm trying to protect my time, I have a colleague who's a senior colleague who I don't want to offend, trying to do a collaboration with them.

So I went to my department chair, and he says, of course you don't need to be doing this. So I said, well, can I send people to you? He said sure.

So when someone came to me and said, Darren, we want you to do this. I go, my department chair says I can't. You should go talk to my department chair. He says, no, he's not going to do this. If you have a problem, you can speak to me. Problem goes away.

So I think, again, you want kind of identify the areas that you want to get to, how you want to get those, and who can help you get to those particular areas. So I'll stop there, and we can re-address anything during the question portion. But that's kind of my general sage advice. And I hope that applies to everyone here in terms of what school, what department, researcher, teacher. But I think those could be very helpful along your path here to Harvard. And welcome, and I wish you continued success and that we'll be colleagues for a long time.

And I have to say if this is the first and last time you ever see me, that's your problem.

[LAUGHTER]

I'm now one of those people, right? We're now one of these people that you can seek out for sage advice, right? Add that to your list now.

[LAUGHTER]

DEVAH PAGER: awesome. Hi, everyone. I'm Devah Pager. So I've just been here two years now. I'm a relative newbie on this panel. Prior to coming to Harvard, I spent nine years at Princeton and before that two years at Northwestern. So I have some comparative perspective. So some of the comments I'll offer will be Harvard-specific and some more universal to how to make this professional life work.

So my first piece of advice-- I think most of you are probably just starting your first jobs in your first semesters. Is that right? How many of you are here in your first semester of your first job? Oh, just a small fraction of you. So others of you have been here for a while now or are starting-- OK.

Anyway, well, welcome to all of you, wherever you're coming from. I would say if you have moved here from somewhere else, whether this is your first job or your second or nth job, I would plan on your first semester being a time for you to enjoy and settle in and not plan to really get any work done, especially if you're teaching this semester. I think the first semester is really a time for you to be settling in, learning where the coffee maker is, signing up for your gym membership, keeping your classes running smoothly, figuring out where you are in the world, and don't put too much pressure on yourself. In a way, the tenure clock is short, but in another sense, you need to take a semester to really settle in. So give yourself that time.

My advice for the first year or for the early periods of your time here is to really spend some time finding a community. And keep in mind that that community may very well be outside your department. I'm talking about an intellectual community as well as a social community. Harvard is a large and diverse campus. It's full of centers and institutes and departments with all kinds of opportunities to meet folks.

And this is an opportunity, especially early on, to really sample from that diversity of opportunities. I think one huge benefit of turning your life upside down to move somewhere new is that you don't have the same things that tie you down and get you stuck in routines and in a particular rut. So while you're kind of unsettled and freewheeling, take this as an opportunity to sample from all kinds of things that you wouldn't ordinarily select into. If that means going to talks in different departments, going to the university events like this one, signing up for recreational activities, meeting people from across campus, I think all of those really enrich your networks and will make your time here more profitable.

When I first got to Northwestern as a new assistant professor, all faculty were required to attend an all-day pedagogy workshop that was put on by the teaching center. This ended up being a completely worthless waste of time in terms of the content. It was just full of really boring and useless information, unfortunately. I think those kinds of workshops could be done very well. I hope they do them better now. But the content ended up being fairly worthless.

But at this workshop, I met two faculty members, one who was a new professor in the psychology department, another new professor in the history department, who became two of my closest friends and remain so to this day. They were close intellectual colleagues, as well as friends, and that was really enriching. So there's a silver lining to spending days sitting and listening to boring panels-- no offense.

[LAUGHTER]

And there can be really terrific things that come out of those events. So really spend some time early on developing those networks.

To echo something that Darren said, I think you also want to think about developing community within your department as well. And I think cultivating mentors is a really important part of that community. I think most new faculty, when they enter a department, some people really take the time and say, I want to get coffee or I want to go to lunch. But the truth is that most people, especially when they've been in their rut and in their routine and are busy with a million commitments, they are thinking to themselves in the back of their mind, oh, I'd really like to get to know this person better, but they just never are able to stop and take a moment and reach out and find a time.

So you should take that initiative. And every semester, make sure that there are at least one or two faculty members in your department that you're reaching out to and say, hey, do you want to get lunch? Do you want to get coffee? And cultivate some of those relationships. Because your colleagues really, really do want to get to know you, even though they're just caught up in their own little bubble.

My third piece of advice is to learn to say no. And more specifically, I'd say just say no more often than you're saying yes. That's kind of my general rule, I think, especially for junior faculty. Now, of course you want to be a good citizen, you want to be a member of your community, and your colleagues will notice that you are contributing and that you're pitching in, and they will appreciate that for sure. But you can't do everything, and you won't get tenure just for being a good committee member.

So figure out where you can make a contribution to your department. Figure out where you can make a contribution to your university. And do those jobs really, really well. But don't get penalized for doing those jobs well by getting roped into participating on 15 other committees. So just plan strategically with your time.

And that goes for professional activities as well. So let's face it. We have awesome jobs, and we get to do all kinds of things that for the most part are really, really enjoyable. So I love giving talks in different departments. I really like going to conferences.

I like speaking to non-academic audiences. I like meeting with policymakers. I like meeting with student groups. I like being included in special edited volumes. There are all kinds of things that are parts of our jobs that we really, really enjoy. But we can't do all of them.

So how do you figure out what to do and what not to do? Well, I have a really, really great litmus test for you. So you have to think to yourself, when you get asked to do something, if you would be willing to do it next week, you probably want to do it. If you wouldn't be willing to do it next week, don't do it at all.

So here's my thinking behind that. Academics get asked to do things six months in advance, 12 months in advance, like well beyond any reasonable sense of having a time horizon or what that feels like. And the temptation is to think, oh, yeah, six months from now, my docket will be clear. Like now is the busy time. This is the crunch time. But once I get past these next few deadlines, things will really clear out.

But the truth is, what you are experiencing now, that's how you feel next spring and the following fall and the year after that and every semester until you retire. So if you're too busy to do it now, the chances are you'll be too busy to do it a year from now. So there are things that I get asked to do that if I had to do them next week, there's no way that I would say yes. And sometimes I get roped into doing things because I've been asked a year and a half in advance, and then I get to the point where I actually have to turn in the chapter or attend the conference, and I'm thinking, what the heck was I thinking? I really don't want to do this.

And there are other things that when they come up, like I really want to be a part of those things, and I would clear my schedule to do them if they were coming up much more quickly. So if you wouldn't want to do it now, you probably won't want to be doing it a year from now. Say no.

OK, last few pieces of advice-- delegate and ask for help. I think this is consistent with the general contractor model. Harvard has a lot of bureaucracy. It's probably the most bureaucratic institution that I've ever been a part of.

[LAUGHTER]

But in my experience, staff, from the level of administrative assistants all the way up to deans, are exceptionally highly qualified and really, really good at their jobs and committed to doing their jobs well. And they're there, for the most part, to help you do your work better. So take advantage of that. Figure out what those resources are and how they can help you.

There are people that can help you with data analysis. There are people that can help you filing your receipts, with sending out your letters of recommendation, with maintaining your bibliographies, with setting up and maintaining your website. There's all kinds of staff out there that can help you do your job better. Sometimes it takes more effort to ask someone else to do it than just to do it yourself, but that's only the first time. So if there's anything that you plan to be doing more than once even, if it's only once a year, find someone else to help you do it and delegate.

And then the last thing I would say is keep in mind that everyone feels like an impostor at least some of the time. Your colleagues did not make a mistake in hiring you. Unless you are Michael LaCour and made up all of your data, there were some very good reasons that your colleagues chose you out of what was an enormous pool of applicants, I am sure. So keep in mind what you love about your work, and your colleagues are going to love it as well.

ELIZABETH ANCARANA: Thank you.

DEVAH PAGER: Yeah. OK. So interesting to hear from all of you. Questions?

SPEAKER 2: Sorry this is a negative, sad question.

[LAUGHTER]

But in your experiences, what are the characteristics-- unscientific observation, fine-- of the people who didn't get promoted? We've heard a lot of the good things that we should be doing, but then like what about the pitfalls?

SPEAKER 3: You ask negative questions.

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER 2: Oh, yeah. My first one was really negative, too.

[LAUGHTER]

JULIE BUCKLER: I can speak to that briefly. And then I'm sure my two colleagues also have something to say. In my remarks, I talked about taking control of your master plan. I mean, obviously it's not a rigid thing, but the people I've seen who haven't gotten tenure have been a bit hapless about it. Many times they're brilliant, but they didn't really take control over their process of doing the work and bringing it to completion. And so often they were just too slow to produce work that could then get a response in the world, and so Harvard didn't have the information it wanted in order to make that judgment.

The fact that we don't have tenured associate rank it means that you have to look like a good prospect as a full professor at the end of your junior appointment. And that's a really tall order. And you just cannot get there without really deliberately making it happen. So that's my advice.

DARREN HIGGINS: Yeah, I think for me, I think it's a multitude of reasons. But really, it can come down to a few things. One is I think the people I've seen who haven't been successful are people who didn't say no and just got too distracted and too diluted in terms of what they were doing and also maybe had a different perception of how they were going to be evaluated and what that criteria were.

So for example, in my particular field, the scholarly production, your publications, how people perceive you in the field, and your research work was very important. They've changed the tracks now in terms of teaching, et cetera, but you've had people who said, well, I've done all these other things, all these other committees, et cetera, but then when you look at the promotion criteria, someone says, that that didn't really count.

One thing now that they do is, for example, the actual letter that gets sent to the people who will write your review of you is available. That is a specific, worded letter. So if you look at that, it's very clear what those criteria are in terms of how you will be evaluated. The question is how you get there.

And the last thing I think, as we all talked about, is people who didn't take advantage of saying, let's go get some assistance to help me get to this point and find people who say, OK, this is an area that you need to work with. You may want to get some more, et cetera, you may want to do some more outside work here, you may have more focus on this. So let's come up with a plan on how to do that.

So really it's this thing I call PPEP, which is Perceived, Planned, and Executed to Perfection. So if you don't perceive what the challenge is, how you're gonna get it and then plan for it, then you can't execute it. But if you do that, then it's not going to be a problem.

And another thing I'll add, too, is tenure is not the end-all, be-all. I've seen a lot of people who leave this institution well before that time frame because they've been so successful in other places they get sucked away. And that's not a bad place to be.

I've seen people leave and go to industry because they've taken that work that way. I've seen people leave and go to other aspects, go start companies, go do things, and they've used the time here to develop that. So I would just add that thing. That's not the end-all, be-all. All if you're enjoying what you're doing and happy and productive, then that's the best place to be.

DEVAH PAGER: Yeah, I would echo those comments. And I think the faculty that I have seen that have not been successful have been folks that have diverted their attention to other activities that maybe gave them more immediate reinforcement but weren't the kind of scholarly production that they needed in order to pass that 10-year bar. And I think sometimes it's like the process of writing articles or books is a long one, and there's very little feedback, and you really have to be extremely patient and endure a lot of criticism, where other things, other parts of our lives, even teaching, for example, where we're getting immediate feedback and where we're feeling like the interaction with the students is really stimulating and that is fantastic-- and being able to combine an active teaching and research life is the ideal, but in some cases, you shift the balance to the thing that's giving you the most immediate gratification.

I'll also say that in addition to the fact that some people do leave prior to tenure and find other things to do, my sense is that not getting tenure at places like Harvard has a very different impact from being at other universities. And so everyone I've seen both at Princeton and Harvard who have not gotten tenure have gotten great jobs at Research 1 universities elsewhere. So in that sense, this isn't the only place in the universe to do good work. [LAUGHING]

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER 4: I just wanted to follow up on the comment from both Julie and Devah about the adjectives "slow" or "fast" scholarly productivity and sort of generally the nature of productivity. I would love to hear you talk a bit-- of course, it would be sort of discipline-specific about what really counts as good productivity and what doesn't. Because sometimes people can think they're doing the right thing, and it might not, in fact, be the best investment of their energy, even if they're intelligently not getting on 17,000 committees or not getting around to doing their work. So can you say something about the sort of temptation to do the wrong kind of productivity and the best ways of judging where your best input for your energy is?

DARREN HIGGINS: I'll make a comment to that. And I think that the best indicator of future success is prior success. And that's a real issue that you bring up in terms of doing something that you may really want to do that gives you a lot of gratification but may not be the best direction that you might want to go in terms of your evaluation for promotion, et cetera.

And so that's where I think having people who are in your mentor checkbox who have sat on the committees and been involved in the evaluation process, who can look at what you do-- and they'll ask you point blank, where are you going with this? Where do you see this beginning, middle, ed? What do you hope to get out of this? And when are you going to get something out of it?

And if someone says, well, this is something that's going to be seven years from now, and they say, well, you're going to be evaluated for associate in five years, this is not where you want to invest your time. So I think it's really getting the benefit of people who can sit down and tell you point blank. You don't want to surround yourself with warm fuzzies-- that's great, that's fantastic, go do it, yes, yes, yes. You also don't want to surround yourself with people who are just, oh, that will never work, don't do it.

You want to find people who are very pragmatic who can then evaluate and say, well, if you do want to do this here are the things that you need to be concerned about. And then ask yourself, am I willing to actually do that? And if the answer is yes, then you might want to take that chance to go and do that. And if the answer is no, then that's a good way to steer you away from those aspects.

JULIE BUCKLER: Well, I said be conscious about your decisions. And by that I mean be informed. Because it is really such a challenging balance, and frankly, it continues to be challenging at every career stage now, in my experience, which is to say that you have to push really hard to move things forward and make them happen. And especially as a junior person here, you really have to work hard to deliver the goods.

But on the other hand, you have to live your life. You do have to find some balance, and you can't turn yourself inside out. And many of us have other commitments of various kinds that are important to us, or there are things we also need to do for our mental health.

So it's really quite tricky. I mean, it's something I guess you decide on a daily basis, which is why I also advocate the use of a master plan so that you can be doing short- and long-term planning. And it's a marathon, basically. You need to be able to sustain your pace. And you need to be able to last. [LAUGHING]

DEVAH PAGER: So I just say that in the social sciences, we tend to work on multiple projects at once. But the danger is that it's a much, much more fun to start new things than it is to finish older things. And I think that's a temptation that needs to be resisted.

So whenever you start a new project, you have to be really, really thoughtful about, is this the thing that I'm really going to commit to going forward, or is this just going to distract me from the work that I already have ongoing? And I feel really strongly about the idea that there is no such thing as a quick and dirty project. So there's often the temptation to think, oh, this new issue came up, or I just found this new source of data. I'm going to do this quick and dirty analysis, and it's just going to take me a week or so, and then I'll write it up, and it just be a little side piece. In my experience, those projects end up taking just as long as the projects that I feel like are really big and important, or can, and so keep in mind that there is no such thing as that quick energy project.

And I just wanted to say for me when I'm evaluating files, I feel like a smaller number of really important, high quality pieces is worth so much more than a long CV of mediocre pieces. And so I would invest more in every single project or publication rather than trying to just stuff your CV full of less meaningful entries.

JULIE BUCKLER: I just want to add something. There was an earlier question about how to describe people who were not successful here. And I am thinking of a particular example of a person who was kind of a writing and publishing machine, endlessly producing and publish-- it's actually not that difficult to place things and get them published. But then it's out there, and the work was kind of shallow. And now that I'm not under that same pressure, I actually publish pretty slowly, because I really don't want my work to be published unless I feel it's my very best work.

And so that's another one of those tensions and paradoxes about the appointment at Harvard, that they do want to see some quantity, but you can't be obsessed with quantity, because it will lead you in the wrong direction. I really agree completely with what you said.

ELIZABETH ANCARANA: Other questions or comments?

SPEAKER 5: What do you do when you get rejected?

JULIE BUCKLER: You mean like something for publication, or--

SPEAKER 5: A book manuscript, a paper, a grant proposal. It's going to happen to everybody in this room. And it's one of the most awful things to happen to a faculty member.

DARREN HIGGINS: That's an evolution. It's funny you say that. First off, rejection is part of it, because everyone has an opinion, and their opinion is not going to necessarily be in tune with yours. And so in terms of the rejection, that's a part of it. My question would be, how many times did I get rejected? So for me, the average time that somebody submits an R1 grant, and I think it's like four times before it gets in. Nowadays, publications, they get it rejected at least once or twice, because people want to see more.

And so I think you have to kind of look it as, what's the rationale and the reason? And so for me, rejection is this is part of it. Did you put something that was-- as Julie was just saying, was it your best effort? Was it not shallow? Was it very well crafted? Great. If someone rejects it, why did they reject it?

And I give you three examples. So sometimes you may get it rejected because of the wrong reasons, which is a competitor saw it, and they just don't want it out there for certain reasons. If it's a publication, I have a habit now of what I do is I just go right to the editors. And I'll call the person-- and they love this-- and I'll say, well, the paper got rejected. Here are the reasons why, this is what I'm willing to do to improve it, This is what I think is completely off base. What do you think?

And they'll say, oh, OK, no we can't do that. Great. I'm going to send it someplace else. Often times, they will agree with you, and they say, well, the reviewer asked you for something that really is not reasonable. That's five more years of work. That's not really reasonable. So if you don't agree, I'm not going to do that, and this is what I'm going to do.

So the benefit of that is now when it goes back, we've addressed all the potential things so it doesn't get rejected again. So it's minimizing the rejection.

In terms of grant processes, as I said, it's many, many times it will get rejected. You certainly have a smaller [INAUDIBLE] larger amount of times you can send it in. The question I would say is, well, did you go get the appropriate advice to see what are the reasons why? Is it not scientifically sound?

And sometimes someone will say, this really isn't scientifically sound. We don't think it's going to work. At that point, you may say, I may have to go to a different direction.

So my answer to that is really, what's the reason for the rejection? And is it based on something that's grounded? And what can I do about that? But rejection is just part of it.

DEVAH PAGER: Yeah, you definitely can't take it personally. There is so much randomness in the review process, in every review process. And some of my favorite papers have gotten rejected by one of the top journals and then accepted by the other top journal in my discipline. And the reviews just read the paper very differently. So I definitely wouldn't take it personally, and in some cases I would just turn around and send it right back out.

There are other cases where you get the reviews back and you realize, you know what? I didn't communicate that idea effectively, and at least for this subset of readers who are coming from a different perspective from me, they need a different set of evidence or arguments that's going to convince them. And then I try to make it better and get out there again.

JULIE BUCKLER: It's a learning process. It seems like whenever I try to move into something new, my first attempts are not successful. And then I try to figure it out from there. But it is disconcerting to realize that, yes, you can submit an article to one of your field's top journals and have it rejected even though you're tenured at Harvard. And it can happen. It does happen regularly. So I don't know. I think thickening your hide a little bit is good, is helpful.

DARREN HIGGINS: One thing I'll add to that is using whatever the rejection was for future information. So for example, in my field there are certain study sections of the evaluation panels that just don't like certain things. And I had this experiment one time, which was a great experiment. I couldn't have designed it any better. I submitted a grant in response to a request for applications, and they had so many requests that they said, we're going to extend the time for evaluation. We're going to give 25 grants, and we have 600 applications. So we have to extend it.

And they said, so we're going to suspect this rule, and you can now submit the exact same grant at the same time as this one to a different study section and just change the name. Because we think there's going to be some great grants, but we don't want you waiting around for six months to get one of these 25 when you could just go to a regular study section and probably get it now. So I said, OK. So I just changed the name and submitted it.

So when I submitted it to the regular studies section, it was triaged-- boom-- wasn't even reviewed. This is horrible. It will never work. It's not innovative. It's not creative. We don't understand why he's submitting this.

But I got one of those 25 grants from the first one. And it was the exact same grant. And what I realized was that that grant for that study section that they asked for for this specific thing was perfect but for the general sort of thing really wasn't as appreciated. So from now on, whenever I submit something, I would say, it needs to be here. It has to get here, it has to get in this particular review panel.

And what I didn't realize in, and one of my mentors told me here, was that you have a right when you submit grants to have your grant reviewed in the most favorable circumstances. So if it gets sent to a study section you don't want it in, you can call up and say, please move it. And I didn't realize that, and I had a grant. It got rejected, another one.

I called up, and I said, this is not the right place. They sent it to the other one, and it got funded. So a lot of it is just the context of who's seeing it, who's looking at it.

And I just want to add this one point now, because this is one of the best pieces of advice that I ever got as a faculty member at Harvard in the last 17 years. And I have to credit my colleague Steve Lory who told me this. And he asked me, he said, how is your stuff going to get reviewed? Do you understand how it's going to get reviewed?

And I said, well, of course I do. They get it, it goes at this study section, it goes to this panel, it goes here, it goes here, great. He goes, no. You don't you know. It's not going to get reviewed that way.

What's going to happen is there's going to be somebody who's tired, who's working all day, who just had a fight with their spouse, whose kid got in trouble with school, whose dog got into the neighbor's yard and messed it up, who's mother-in-law is coming and crashed the car. And they're going away for some other meeting, and they have this limited window of time, and they pull out your paper, your grant, to read it on the plane while they're going to wherever they're going to before they come back to everything that's going on in their life.

So your stuff is going to get reviewed under the worst possible circumstances. So you need to make sure you understand that and make sure everything is clear. And he just gave the sage advice of, if I read this page and I stopped, and then I picked it back up again and I looked at it, what's most important? Put that in highlight. Do this.

Every time you start a new section, repeat the same thing. If I'm having a conversation and I interrupt your conversation, I come back, OK, catch me up to where I am. That's how it's going to get reviewed. So it's these little sort of pieces of things and understanding the realities of the process which I think will be very beneficial.

And that's the thing, because it takes time, as Julie said, to understand the realities. But once you understand that, I think it becomes more tenable. Because now whenever I write anything, I assume this is going to be read by somebody on a plane in the worst possible lighting with the kid behind him kicking in the seat. Because I have reviewed things in that same way.

[LAUGHTER]

SPEAKER 6: Hi. So let's say you're in a field which is very ideologically polarized with a lot of political controversy. Let's say your work can be controversial. And that will affect, of course, reviews. That will affect what people are going to say when they send things out for tenure and stuff. How would you navigate that, sort of knowing in advance that this is the kind of field you're in and there are sort of big ideological stakes, there are going to be divides and angry opponents, things like that? How do you navigate that in terms of tenure?

DEVAH PAGER: So every field and every department are different. My advice would be to keep in mind that affect can overcome ideology, and you shouldn't automatically assume that whatever factions exist in your department are immediately going to be imposed on you. And so you may have natural allies, and you may fit in better with one set of senior faculty than another. But you shouldn't give up on cultivating relationships and contact with the wider pool of faculty, because if people see you as a human being, not just a member of this warring faction, I think they're going to be more invested in understanding your work and seeing its contribution and seeing it in light of its full scholarly potential rather than just seeing you as one part of an opposing army. So, yeah, that would be my advice.

JULIE BUCKLER: I think it's absolutely right that you find allies in strange places and at its best, people practice here this kind of culture of civility, where you sit around a table at a department meeting talking about a search or some intellectual issue. And there are real differences in views, and people really care a lot about the outcome, and it's quite a challenge to remain civil and to keep things from getting heated and to stand your ground. But when it works, it's such a beautiful system. You'll see it in operation in your department and program. And it's such an invaluable skill.

It's never a good idea to send an email when you're annoyed, to snap one off-- always a bad idea. And it's always a bad idea to snap at a colleague in a meeting. And you just really have to have good self-control.

DARREN HIGGINS: Yeah, I think just to echo the two things is the word ally. I think if you're going into a field where there's a lot of political issue, a lot of contention, the question is, who are the most prominent people that may have some sensitivities to what you're doing and how you can actually change it or direct it? That gets to the thing I mentioned about writing your own recommendation letter in terms of being able to clearly articulate what you're bringing to the table that no one else is and how your view may be productive.

And just focus on the focus on the positive aspect. Here is something that may be able to unify and get past some of the contention that you're having and you're having to come to a unified agreement. And this is how I'm going to approach it and how I'm going to do that. And I think as starting someone new, that actually a benefit. My own personal experience, there was a little bit of warring factions in my group between the Americans and the French and the Germans. And then this Canadian scientist came in and collaborated with all of us secretly--

[LAUGHTER]

--and then published his paper with everybody on it that we then realized, like wow. And then we said, this was someone who came completely from a different field, who really changed our thinking and was able to overcome this sort of entrenched political squabble. And we realized, yeah, this person did us a service. So I think if you can position yourself in that way, that's a way to overcome that initial angst of moving into a direction that way.

ELIZABETH ANCARANA: Well, that was really very informative. Thank you to our three panelists for joining us today.

[APPLAUSE]

And now Judy will provide some closing remarks.

JUDITH D. SINGER: Thank you. Well, actually, thank you all for being here. It means a lot of us to see all these new faces and to think about what the faculty of the future of Harvard is going to be like. And also thank our colleagues here for taking the time and our prior colleagues for taking the time.

Essentially I just want people to get to know each other. So I think we're going to provide a break time. But you have heard some themes here that I just want to reiterate-- some of the phrases of having a master or being the general contractor of your life. I always say have a mission statement.

And part of that is being strategic. Time is short. And so I think a lot of the questions, a lot of the comments were about ways in which people try to be strategic about their time and their energy and their resources.

Another part is, learning to say "I don't know" is one of the hardest things for a Harvard faculty member to say. Because we selected you. We expect you know everything. And you know something? You don't.

And so whether it's learning to say "I don't know" to a student, when it's learning to say "I don't know" to a colleague, when it's learning to say "I don't know" to a colleague. "Can you give me some advice?" And then never only ask one person. Because if you only ask one person, you'll be convinced that that person just gave you the right answer. And chances are that person didn't. So learning how to ask questions is something that has come up time and a time.

And reaching outside of your boundaries is something that we're very interested in. I've had the pleasure reading most of your dossiers. So a lot of the work that's done by the people in this room increasingly is interdisciplinary. And so learning how to cross boundaries, but also being strategic and not crossing so many boundaries that you're splat on the floor and you haven't done the kinds of strategic things that you need to be successful. And if the success leads to tenure, great. If it doesn't, at least you'll be true to yourself.

And so being successful and strategic and time management-- I think several people said that's probably the most important thing. Learning to say no is about time management. Being proactive is about time management.

Instead of waiting to see what committees you're asked to be on, think about what the two things you want to do are, go to your department chair or your academic dean and say, these are the things that interest me. They're perfectly happy to figure out how to work around that. So instead of just waiting for things to happen, being proactive and having that align with your mission becomes another way to think about being successful here.

I'm going to close it out by just saying there are going to be a lot of other events the semester. Some of them you've already gotten e-mails about. We have an event at the Houghton Library at the end of the month. The Houghton library is a jewel box on the Harvard campus. It's the rare book collection.

[INAUDIBLE] Menand from the English department is going to be giving a talk. You're going to be able to go and touch Emily Dickinson's desk. And you can pick out books, first editions, notes by various authors. You can think about your favorite author and go find the papers that he or she might have given. So I encourage you to join us.

There will also be a publishing event, where we're inviting editors from Harvard and MIT Press. And we've got a book agent. So if you're interested, if you're in a book field, learning about the book world-- even if you're not yet there, it just sort of gives you an idea about it issues involved in book publishing.

On the fun side, we've got bank of tickets for the ART in December. We hold a reception at the ed school, which is right across from the American Repertory Theater. So I encourage you to join us for that.

I hold lunches for tenure-track faculty during the year. So we've got a whole bunch of things planned. We often do things on social media, on op-ed writing about getting your voice out there. So we're always looking for ideas. So if you have any idea about something you'd like to learn more about, chances are you're not the only person. Let Elizabeth-- Elizabeth there conveniently have the same name-- or me know, and we'd be happy to steal your idea and magnify it for other people.

So why don't I stop here? We have a reception upstairs. You can go check your email and do all of those kinds of things. Hang out in the lobby, or just hang out here. Or come up to the reception to meet. We have about another 30 or 40 people coming from across the university.

So I just want to say thank you very much for joining us. And I look forward to meeting every one of you and talk. My goal is to know every Harvard faculty member. I'm actually not bad at it at this point. So I look forward to talking to all of you. And thank you.

[APPLAUSE]