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Collaboration is the Key to Success in Publishing Your Work

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publish. Often times you do not have a mentor to guide you and you are off on your own pathway to tenure. While I had many good ideas about some teaching research I wanted to perform with my students I needed help in executing a study and publishing my work. While the goal was clear, the plan and the execution were not. Where to start was the biggest and most difficult hurdle.

I assumed incorrectly that the best way to be successful in publishing was to do it on my own. After all, I would only be accountable to myself and need not worry about collaborators who might be hard to reach and would take a long time to complete their portion of a manuscript. I tried this path initially and it was incredibly difficult as I could only work on one project at a time. The turning point came when I attended an Experimental Biology (EB) meeting Teaching Section symposium several years ago; I vividly recalled an excellent presentation where the speaker showed us an elegant study of how he used active learning and student grades improved. This talk inspired me and I got excited to try this with my class by performing a similar study. The excitement abruptly ended when he stated the two sections of students he used for his study had 250 and 300 students respectively. My own classes are between 12-20 students, quite small in comparison and I was completely disheartened thinking it would take years of study before I surveyed that many students. After the talk, I went up to him to ask a question, there was someone in front of me that asked the question that I had planned to ask. She said "I have small classes and for me to do a study of significance would take years". I chimed in "I am in the same situation". He answered us both with one word "Collaborate". I walked away disheartened as I did not know anyone that I could collaborate with on a study.



After some time to reflect that this course of action was what I needed I developed an active plan to execute at the next EB meeting. At the Claude Bernard Lecture, I introduced myself to Barb Goodman. This was an excellent choice, as Barb knows everyone and she was kind enough to introduce me to everyone who approached her. From there my confidence grew. The next smart decision I made was to sit in the front during the lecture and all future Teaching Section Symposia. Do not hide in the back as people sometimes come in late and this can be distracting. In the front of the room are the friendly people who are very happy to talk with you and share ideas.

The next step was to follow the program and attend the Teaching Section luncheon. At this event, a small group of people dedicated to teaching and student success sit and talk about the different classes they teach and share ideas about teaching challenges. The tables are small and round so you can meet everyone at your table. Another key event to attend at EB is the Teaching Section Business meeting and dinner. At the dinner, you get a chance to meet more people in a relaxed setting. Some of the attendees have attended the other events and this is a great way to practice your recall and talk with them on a first name basis.



The final step in meeting people with whom to collaborate is to participate in an Institute on Teaching and Learning (ITL). There have been three of these meetings so far (2014, 2016 & 2018) and the meeting actively encourages you to meet new people at each meal and form new collaborations. Through this meeting, I met many of my collaborators and successfully published abstracts and papers (listed below), received one grant, was a symposium speaker, and chaired a symposium. The meeting is energizing as the program is packed with new ideas and teaching strategies to try in your classroom. It is easy to ask questions and be an active participant in the discussions. Thus, taking advantage of a number of opportunities for physiology educators through the American Physiological Society can be just the push you need to get going on a successful promotion and tenure process. Join the APS and its Teaching Section to keep up-to-date on what is going on in physiology education.

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