I Got the Job -
WHY AM I SO ANXIOUS?

As we climb each rung of academe - high school, college, graduate school, first job, even tenure - we tend to think that we can stop worrying at last about whether we are “good enough,” and that we will be quickly welcomed into a fellowship of like minded colleagues.

Unfortunately, Kathy Newman’s feelings are much more common:

“In spite of my incredible, even enviable situation, in the first two years of this job I have had some moments of inexplicable despair... As I began to ask around, I found I was not alone. When I interrogated my friends and colleagues in similar jobs across the country, we all conceded that we were very lucky to have tenure-track jobs in this dismal market. But at the same time, many of us admitted to feeling...
overworked, nervous, anxious, and mysteriously depressed. 1

Newman’s solution to the anxieties of the Junior Professorate is to talk to each other and to organize, seeking coalitions with graduate students, adjuncts, and senior faculty. This might be possible if university administrators hadn’t corporatized to the extent that mere membership in a union can be the kiss of death for many junior faculty.

Newman objects to advice like Ms. Mentor’s (Emily Toth) 2 because, insisting on “individual struggle and accommodation” until tenure is obtained, it reinforces the sense of isolation plaguing a junior faculty woman whose loneliness often comes from being either the only junior woman (a stressor in and of itself), or from being one of two women forced to compete for a single tenure slot. Then, she is often in a department with so few tenured women that they have to accommodate male colleagues.

In the worst case scenario, where you are almost entirely surrounded by tweedy male colleagues and you decide to renounce assimilating pseudo masculinity (and many have chosen that route), your first line of defense is to strengthen your internal self-esteem as a woman academic.

Tips for self-empowerment:

• “In breaking our silences, the absences, the nameless, the naming ourselves, uncovering the hidden, making ourselves (as women) present, we begin to define a reality which resonates with us, which affirms our being, which allows the woman teacher and student alike to take ourselves, and each other, seriously; meaning, to begin taking charge of our lives.” Adrienne Rich

• To keep your sense of feminine/feminist empowerment strong, develop women’s friendship groups (probably off campus) and meet often.

• Articulate from strength: “At my ‘post-doc’ institution...I learned the importance of visibility. I pushed myself to speak up, writing down the questions I would force myself to articulate so I could at least have the right words, both at our internal meetings and at national conferences. I have learned, too, the subtle art of boasting about the presentations I get invited to give and about prestigious conferences when my papers get accepted there...it is necessary to remind one’s colleagues that one is respected nationally or internationally (I do this by referring to these invitations in embedded clauses; e.g., ‘when I was at the conference on X in Guadeloupe last week I heard...’ Or, ‘I’m afraid I won’t be able to be at that meeting next week because I’ve been invited to speak at the XYZ meeting in London.’)” 3

VIRGINIA VALIAN TELLS WOMEN: WHY SO SLOW?

In Why So Slow? The Advancement of Women (Cambridge: M.I.T. 1998) Hunter College Professor Virginia Valian urges faculty women to be realistic about the way academe is set up, and to develop strategies which take these realities into account:

"...women advance more slowly and earn less money than men. The history of the profession in the past few decades suggests that the problem of women's lower status in academia will not dissipate in the fullness of time."

Women in their first academic jobs need to face the fact that "since 1976 there has been zero progress in closing the tenure gap between men and women."

It is a grave mistake to think that just by teaching well, getting grants, publishing your research, and excelling in departmental service you will rise on your merits. Academe is not now and has never been a merit parkway. Women are still devalued as women and also tend to devalue themselves. Once you have absorbed this grim news, Valian suggests some useful strategies:

- "Be where women are well-represented...if a woman is one of many, she is less likely to be perceived in terms of her sex." This means that if at all possible in your job search you should choose departments where there are a good number of women both at tenured and untenured levels. Then, if you have any choice over the committees you serve on, check their gender balance first.
- "Be impersonal, friendly, and respectful." Being too personal, friendly, and complaining does not connote competence in academe.
- Don't overvalue honesty and candor: "it is not necessary to tell people exactly what we think of them or exactly what is wrong with their suggestions."
- Choose activities that build power
  - out of the ordinary
  - not part of the job description
  - visible to others in the group
  - relevant to current organizational problems
- Negotiate, bargain, seek advancement.
- Overcome internal barriers to effectiveness: work on your beliefs about yourself, tell yourself how great you are, cultivate self-worth.
WORK SMART, NOT HARD: ASSESSING YOUR SERVICE COMMITMENTS

By Suzanna Rose

When it is time for tenure, promotion, or to select a department chair, "hardworking" is not synonymous with "competent" or "smart."

"Hardworking" is a term that could be used to describe many women faculty. Women professors often are overloaded with time consuming, low status service obligations such as curriculum committee work and student advising. Department chairs and colleagues expect - and get - more service from women. In my research on professors, women more often than men were asked to serve on committees and more often accepted this responsibility. When doing career consulting with women at various universities, I invariably am told that colleagues take for granted that women will do a lot of the departmental "housekeeping," such as course scheduling and trouble shooting about student complaints.

Women assistant professors are prime targets for service exploitation and may have to make strong efforts to protect their time. Untenured women need to resist being bullied by senior men. Saying "No" is an option, particularly if explained in the context of other research and commitments.

Women of color at all ranks also are disproportionately asked to serve on departmental and university committees so there will be a minority representative. Here, too, it is important that they elect to serve on only a few and preferably those with some clout.

Senior women are not immune from service overload. Many have a highly developed sense of responsibility to others. Flattery also maybe used to get senior women to do the drudge jobs. One woman professor at the peak of her research career took on a time-consuming job in the department mainly because her chair said, "You're the only person who can clean up this mess." She was grateful to be noticed, finally.

Unfortunately, women's hard work often is not rewarded. When it is time for tenure, promotion, or to select a department chair, "hardworking" is not synonymous with "competent" or "smart." In fact, those who work hard are often seen more as mules than race horses, and senior colleagues who want to back a winner are unlikely to pick a mule.

"Working smart" is a better strategy for women. Working smart involves carefully selecting and assessing what service commitments you will accept, instead of working hard to meet responsibilities for service you did not choose. Aim for service on committees that have high impact (i.e., involve money or jobs). High impact committees play a "gatekeeper" role and your presence may help a few women through the gate. High impact committees also will expand your network of important contacts.

It's a good idea to keep a mental or written list of all your service commitments so you won't be caught off guard by service requests. "I'll get back to you on that" is a handy phrase to keep in mind. If you do end up on a low impact, labor-intensive committee, be sure to negotiate for - or volunteer for - a higher status committee next time. Generally, some high impact committees include:

- Search Committees for tenure track faculty positions
- Budget and Planning
- Space Allocation
- Tenure and Promotion Review
- Grant Review Committees

Your time is valuable. Make it count. Choose your service with care.

Suzanna Rose, Ph.D., is professor of psychology at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and a career consultant for women faculty. Her web page is http://www.umsl.edu/~srose.
CONCERNS REBORN

Under the editorship of Wendy Hesford and Judith Roof, the Women's Caucus for the Modern Language Association is once again publishing Concerns. Their Spring/Summer 1999 issue has practical articles on two subjects: Pedagogy and the Paradoxes of Self-Disclosure Sex Discrimination in the Academy Today.
You can receive the magazine by joining the Caucus.

Dues are:
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Indiana University English Department
BH 442, Bloomington, IN 47405
query whesford@indiana.edu or jroof@indiana.edu for more guidelines.

CROW POST DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS

The University of Memphis, Center for Research on Women (CROW) is offering residential postdoctoral fellowships, financed by the Rockefeller Foundation, to scholars studying race and gender in the mid-South. They are particularly interested in proposals that demonstrate close familiarity with the social context of the mid-South, and that approach race and gender as dynamic relationships of contestation and power. Scholars may apply for up to $30,000 in financial support for one academic year (Sept-May). Funds are available for travel and health insurance. Fellows are expected to be in residence at CROW where they receive office space and clerical support. The application deadline for fall, 2000 fellowships is January 17, 2000. Contact: Center for Research on Women, Campus Box 526105, The University of Memphis, Memphis TN 38152-6105 or e-mail crow@memphis.edu.

"The most difficult strategy is how to work within the power structure in order to get what I want and, at the same time, to have the guts to oppose the structure when I disagree with it.
Nothing can be accomplished by speaking with a single voice; it is quickly drowned out in a chorus of no's. The key to success is to form allegiances with the sources of power without compromising personal values.
One has to be informed, know all the angles, both factual and political, and do a tremendous amount of lobbying. I have to learn whom to trust; this means I can't be either overly suspicious or naive. It is a delicate balance."

Maxine Kumin, Living a Political Life.
WEBS FOR SISTERHOOD

National Women’s Studies Association:
http://www.nwsa.org
Look for our link there and email your queries and tips to AVPratt@aol.com.
Remember, however, that you should not send anything by your office email that you don’t want read by your departmental chair or dean, who have access to university email. It is better to use private email for networking about job strategies!

American Association of University Professors:
womdisc@aaup.org
This is a listserv for women to exchange information on their lives in academe. You can also contact deuben@aaup.org (Donna Euben) who is managing the service.

Women in Science:
To join DAPHNET, a list for and about women in science and engineering, send the message “subscribe daphnet firstname lastname” to listserver@ic.ac.uk

Jenny Abrams wrote us to suggest a good read: Mentor in a Manual: Climbing the Academic Ladder to Tenure, by Robert Magnon and Clay Schoenfeld. Atwood Publishing, 2nd Edition 1994: “I wish I had read this three years ago when I took this position.”

Watch the next issue for news about the NWSA Conference next June at Simmons College in Boston from our Academic Discrimination Advisory Board Conference Coordinator Sharon Leder.

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