

# Finding, Establishing and Maintaining Productive Research Collaborations

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**SCHOOL OF MEDICINE**

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# Collaborations

- Certainly, most people do have them
- If you came from a large laboratory, you probably collaborated with a fellow graduate student or postdoc
- Sometimes, however, even when coming from a large lab, there are no “intramural” collaborations
- Has anyone here not collaborated with another investigator before?
  - it is OK if you have not

# Collaborations—advantages:

- Long gone are the days in which one person is lone in their field
- You can't know everything
- Collaborators contribute expertise you do not have
- You learn from them
  - but, they also learn from you
- Productivity can have more breadth and work could be published more quickly

# How do you find people to collaborate with?

- Seminars that people give
  - here or elsewhere
- Literature
- Colleagues make a suggestion
  - thus, you need to talk to your colleagues!
  - this includes me—that's part of my job!
- What if you are the only one here who works in your field?

# How do you find people to collaborate with? #2

- Scientific meetings
- A manuscript (or grant) you reviewed
  - someone with complementary interests
  - you have to be very careful so that there is no concern you are “stealing ideas”
- Study section colleagues
  - their own research could complement yours
  - they often suggest people at their institutions
- When you give seminars (here and elsewhere)

# Making contact:

- Email (IUSM/IUPUI or outside)
- Phone (does anybody use this ancient communication device anymore?)
- Meet face-to-face
  - scientific meeting (outside person) or at their office (faculty here or close by)
- Video conferencing (e.g., Skype)
  - when distance is an issue, but you still want the semblance of a face-to-face meeting

## Collaborations—disadvantages:

- Whose efforts are the greatest (i.e., most) in publications?
- Who should be first/corresponding author?
- Is this a new area for you?
  - it can be an advantage OR a disadvantage
- Will this help you take your research program to the next level?
  - it can be an advantage OR a disadvantage
- You are at their mercy for when their experiments are completed



# Things to agree to upfront:

- How frequently should you meet to discuss collaborative data?
- Who will be the corresponding author(s)?
- How will you divide responsibilities?
- Will graduate students and/or postdocs be participating?
- Who will be first author(s) on the first (and subsequent) papers?
- Who will present the work at national and international meetings?

# Collaborative grants:

- How do you decide on which funding agency to go for?
- How to divide grant writing responsibilities?
- Timeline
  - you must agree--and stick to it
  - this can be hard if you are junior and at the mercy of a more established investigator
- Who contributes what preliminary data?
  - that really depends on focus of grant
- Who is PI? Co-PI? Multiple PIs?

## **Best way to maintain a collaboration:**

- Both of you receive recognition and benefits for the work
- You are both productive and get along
- Trainees receive appropriate credit  
--and feel that they have
- Both of you present the work and recognize the contributions of your collaborator during seminars
- The results of your studies become increasingly interesting to you both

## Questions and Myths:

- If I collaborate with a senior investigator, will I look independent enough for promotion and tenure (P & T)?
- If I am a multi-PI on an NIH (or NSF) grant with a senior investigator, how does this look for my P & T?
- If I do not have grants that are solely my own, I will not look sufficiently independent.
- If I am a co-corresponding author with someone more senior, I will not have an emerging national reputation for my research.

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# What is considered in P & T for researchers?

- For an Assistant going up for promotion to Associate Professor...
  - emerging national recognition
    - publications, presentations, etc.
  - funding for your research program
- For an Associate going up to Full Professor...
  - Sustained national recognition
  - Emerging international recognition

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## Multiple PIs on a grant?

- The NIH now allows this
  - all PIs receive equal credit
  - is this “double-dipping”?
- The NSF has been doing this longer and strongly encourages this
  - allows junior PIs to develop throughout the course of the grant
  - Delineation of effort needs to be clearly described
  - Do P & T definitions need to change?



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## Do P & T rules need to change to account for this?

- Not necessarily
- How are we defining “success” for research faculty?
- How do we truly define “independence” in the context of one’s research program?
- Can collaborative research be viewed as a synergistic interaction between productive “independent” investigators?

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# Can you demonstrate emerging national recognition by your collaborative efforts with an established investigator?

- No matter what, you need to demonstrate that you had an essential role as an independent force/voice in the collaboration
- The collaborator can direct some inquiries s/he received as a “corresponding author” to you
  - e.g., the question involves your area(s) of expertise in the collaboration

# Can you demonstrate emerging national recognition by your collaborative efforts with an established investigator? #2

- Your collaborator suggests that you (rather than him or her) give an invited talk on the research at a national meeting
- You are **directly invited** to give the talk
  - this happens particularly if you know the meeting organizer/session chair
- Co-write a review article on your collaborative work
  - you are both corresponding authors

# What are the risks as a junior person if I collaborate with a senior investigator?

- You are diluted responsibility- and credit-wise
- After the first paper or two, the other party decides to pursue the work...
  - without you
- You decide that you do not like collaborating with this person...
  - but s/he still wants to
- They pursue the work without your knowledge
  - very unusual and highly unlikely

# How do you maintain (and get the most of out of) a productive research collaboration?

- Do your fair part
- Communicate...
  - regularly
- Learn all you can...
  - contribute all you can
- But, don't let yourself get stepped on
- Appreciate the opportunity to grow/mature as an investigator
- Take your work to the next level...

# Advice for faculty establishing and maintaining a productive collaboration...

- If you do not know them, find out—ask people who know or have collaborated with them in the past
  - probably best to do this discretely (or as matter-of-fact)
- Be very positive
- Fulfill your end of the “bargain”
- Ideally, it will become a very productive, long-term collaboration
- Make it a good two-way street...



# Establishing collaborations with investigators **OUTSIDE** of your area...

- This can be a very productive collaborative relationship
- “Low-hanging” fruit
- Bringing two distinct but potentially complementary areas together to attack an important, previously unstudied area
- We will have a networking seminar in the Spring that includes this topic, based upon a book by the late Dr. Carole Bland and her colleagues (Univ. of Minnesota)
- The seminar (and a workshop) will be given by her collaborator, Dr. Anne Marie Weber-Main

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**Other's experiences to share...**

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**Additional questions?**

**Please fill out the evaluations  
and hand in as you leave**

**Thank you for attending...**

# Additional Feedback?

*Let me know your ideas/other thoughts on this topic*

*Every little bit helps you AND your colleagues*

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