Lessons Learned at
Lessons for Success

Chaleece Sandberg, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
The Pennsylvania State University
Background

- MA in Speech Language Pathology from UT - Austin
- PhD in Speech and Hearing Sciences from BU
- Assistant Professor at Penn State
In the beginning...

- Year 2 of PhD
  - F31
    - Not even scored!
      - Not enough publications
      - Depression
      - Motivation

- 1 year later
  - New Century Scholars
    - Failed
      - Is it me?
      - Is it my idea?
      - Depression
      - Demotivation

- Grant writing course
  - Critical evaluation of rejected F31
    - Clarity and focus
    - Strengthen resume
    - Strengthen team
  - New motivation

- Year 4
  - F31
    - Success!
    - THIS IS HARD!
      - Is this REALLY my future?

- Lessons for Success!
Lessons for Success

- YOU ARE NOT ALONE!
  - Peers with similar background and goals
  - Mentors with relevant experience and desire to help
Lessons for Success

- Grants are hard
  - Clear, concise, grounded, interesting
  - Original, but not outlandish
  - Cutting edge, but established
  - Match the PI and the project to the mechanism (R, K, F, P...)
  - Tailor structure and content to agency
    - NIH
    - NSF
    - Foundations
Lessons for Success

- Grants are not impossible
  - Practice makes perfect
  - Method to the madness
- Contacts
  - Program officer
  - Department head
  - Grant coordinator
  - Mentor
  - Colleagues
    - Perspective at each level of career stage
The aftermath…

Hired at Penn State – August 2014
  - F31 was a gold star on CV
    ▪ Publications

Submitted:
  - New Century Scholars (May 2014)
    ▪ Success!
    ▪ Serious jump-start
  - Grant Program for Projects on Multicultural Activities (May 2014)
    ▪ Failure
  - Internal grant from Social Science Research Institute (April 2015)
    ▪ Awaiting response…
  - Internal grant (co-PI) from Clinical and Translational Science Institute (April 2015)
    ▪ Awaiting response…
The aftermath...

In progress/planning:
- Grant Program for Projects on Multicultural Activities (May 2015)
- Advancing Academic-Research Careers (AARC) Award (May 2015)
- R03 (October 2015)
- K
- R21

Goal: 1 submission per cycle
Strategies

- Communication
  - Tell people what you’re working on / thinking of working on
    - Potential collaborators
    - Potential funding mechanisms
    - Reign in/expand ideas
  - Talk to your current and former mentors
    - Experience
    - Organize and plan
  - Form support groups
    - Lunch bunch
    - Writing group

- Talk to your department head
  - Align grant plan with tenure plan
  - Get excited about work
  - Meetings with other departments

- Meet with grant coordinator early
  - Funding mechanisms

- Talk to potential collaborators early
  - Involved with grant submission

- Talk to program coordinator
  - Send specific aims and verify funding mechanism
Strategies

▪ Learn
  – Attend workshops
    ▪ Conferences
    ▪ University
    ▪ Lessons for Success!
  – Scour websites
    ▪ NIH
    ▪ NSF
    ▪ ASHA
  – Embrace rejection
    ▪ Why?
    ▪ Piet Heim

▪ Organize, prioritize
  – Grant tracker
  – Conference tracker
  – Eisenhower box

▪ Write
  – Revise
    ▪ Rewrite
      – Revise
        ▪ Rewrite...
Strategies

- Be a good citizen
  - Be prompt
    - Meetings
    - Emails
  - Be reliable
  - Be involved
    - Lunches
    - Lectures, symposia, colloquia
    - Volunteer
      - Service is required
      - Service is reciprocal
      - Service is an “inside scoop”

- Be KIND
  - Relieves stress
  - Builds relationships
  - Promotes collegiality
  - Does NOT make you a pushover
BE BRILLIANT!