Charting Your Path to Full

A Guide for Women
Associate Professors

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From Chapter 2, "Organization, Organization, Organization." (excerpt, 49-54).

My Go-To Strategies

> *I feel like there are a hundred different ways I could go, but I have little direction or mentorship. So I feel like I have to do all one hundred things, and it is overwhelming.*
> *—Associate professor, social sciences, master's college or university, larger program*

In this section, I share examples of tried-and-true strategies, tips, and tools to support motivation, engagement, and a focus on joy. The tools and tips shared are grounded in human resources and career-development literatures and practice. They are some of my go-to activities and resources that I share in workshops and with consulting clients to great success.

"Atta Girl" Folder

I am sure we have all experienced a time when we were preparing a yearly review or some evaluative narrative and we were sure that we received an email from someone noting the importance and quality of our work. Yet that email appears to have vanished. To combat this, I strongly encourage you to create an "Atta Girl" folder in your email and/or on your computer desktop. In fact, take two minutes and create one right now— you will be glad that you did.

I swear by this simple organizational tool to keep all the correspondence I receive from students, parents, peers, colleagues, alumni, and anyone else who can speak to my value-added contribution across the many contexts in which I engage. If you opened my email inbox right now, you would see a long list of email folders that I create per project, task, or course. I delete the folders after they are inactive for two years (except for course-specific folders). If you look in my alphabetized email folder list, for example, you will see the following:

- Aspiration Paper
- Assessment
- Associate Director Candidate
- Athletic Advisory Council
- Atta Girl Post-Full
- Atta Girl Post-Tenure
- Atta Girl Pre-Tenure
- AUP Materials

Every correspondence in which I receive feedback that speaks to my contribution in the classroom, in research, in consulting, to the life of the campus, and so goes in one of these folders. And you will note that I have created new folders that align with the career stage I was or am in to keep better track chronologically of such correspondence. For example, one email from a student in my "Atta Girl PostFull" folder reads, "Hi Vicki, I just wanted to say thank you for always providing feedback on our assignments and papers in a timely matter. I have definitely had my fair share of professors who lack this ability and really appreciate you taking the time to offer individual feedback. Thanks again!"

For the purposes of a narrative to be used for promotion and tenure, I might include this email to illustrate my "excellence" in teaching. While I assume all of my peers provide feedback and do so in a timely manner, my assumption was clearly incorrect, on the basis of this message. To have the words of a student who speaks on my behalf about the quality and timeliness of my feedback and review is more powerful than my simply communicating as much in an evaluative document that I prepare on my own behalf. Faculty peers might view the timely feedback I provide as expected; when communicated by a student, it signals a potentially higher, more thoughtful quality of feedback that goes above and beyond what is expected and clearly executed by some of my peers.

In addition to including email correspondence in these folders, I also include other documents such as features in the press; featured stories at Albion College in which my teaching, research, or service are noted; or when my name is included in professional association newsletters or other correspondence. Once it's time to create my narrative for merit, bonus, promotion, or other professional purposes, I rely on these words and comments to illustrate my contribution and successes (read more about this in chapter 3).

Saved Atta Girl emails also serve a second, significant purpose. On those days when you find it especially challenging in the classroom or when data analysis is not going the way you had hoped, reading others' encouraging or complimentary words helps to assuage the disappointment. Atta Girl emails are a good reminder that you have made a difference in the life of a person and your institution. Read them often.

Project Tracking Sheet (or Program/Application)

Today, there are many application-based organizational tools available such as **Trello, Wrike, and Gantt**. I have worked with Gantt on consulting projects, and it has worked well for providing a visual of the work, percentage of completion updates, and details about my team members' progress and assigned responsibilities (including my own). I prefer to track my projects via an **Excel** file that I now turn into a **Google Doc** so collaborators can make edits and

updates as well. Regardless of what you find most useful and stress-free (because no one wants an organizational tool that causes more stress and anxiety as opposed to less), a project tracking sheet serves as a visual accounting of research or other work-related tasks that include short-term goals and associated tasks, as well as the end goal with a projected completion date. This visual accounting and level of detail goes back to the guidance of Klauser, in which you write it down to make it happen.

In the vault of great advice from my minor adviser in graduate school is his visual accounting of research-related projects in the form of a color-coded Gantt chart consisting of several projects at different stages. He illustrated projects that were spanning the conception stage to those that were in progress (data collection, data analysis) and those that were near completion and were in the dissemination and publication-preparation phase. This allowed him to have a research pipeline and a multitude of projects that would help him achieve the "research excellence" criteria that accompany being a business professor in a top research university.

Accepting different roles across research or teaching serves a purpose as well. Diversifying your roles solves the time dilemma, as it is impossible to lead every project, produce at the levels expected by your institution, and still be sane when all is said and done. In the context of research, for example, my minor adviser urged the importance of illustrating my ability to lead a collaboration (e.g., principal investigator [PI] on a research grant, lead author with one or more collaborators), to be a strong collaborator (e.g., co-PI on a research grant, second or third author on a publication), and to be self-directed, as evinced through sole authorship. I have been deliberate in assuming these roles at various points throughout my career.

As Covey notes and as explained further in chapter 6, collaboration is instrumental. Over the span of the majority of my career, I have been fortunate to have two amazing colleagues, Meghan J. Pifer and Laura Gail Lunsford, who are also my coauthors. In fact, Meghan and I have been collaborating since graduate school. We maintained what we called the "Baker-Pifer Research and Publication Plan" to track our research-related projects. This project plan got me through promotion and tenure and was an essential organizational tool for both of us. As you can see from the 2014 version of the plan (figure 2.1), we tracked all aspects of a given project. We have since published every paper or idea that appears.

We used this project plan as a strong accountability tool but allowed ourselves to adjust when needed. Also, of importance is the inclusion of targeted conferences on the research plan tracking sheet. We would target a conference, submit a proposal, and use the conference as a milestone to present our research but also to ensure that we had a complete draft of the paper required by the conference. We would then treat feedback from our conference-session discussant as an "outside friendly review" and revise our paper as necessary before submitting for publication.

Manuscript	Project	Type	Conference	Authorship	Next deadline	Publication	Submit goal	Submit date
1. Professional / Relational / Personal Framework	Doc Ed / Pifer Dissertation	data analysis	ASHE 2010	Pifer/ Baker		*Teachers College Record*	—	6.13.14
2. Challenges and Opportunities of the Doctoral Education Process: Insights for Students, Faculty Members, and Administrators	Stage 2 / Stage 3	data analysis	ASHE 2009	Pifer/ Baker		*Change*	Dec. 2014	
3. Identity & The Academy	Identity & Professoriate	data analysis	ASHE 2012	Pifer/ Baker		*Handbook of Higher Education*	Fall 2014	
4. Conceptual Model of Doctoral Education	Doctoral Education	lit review / theoretical		Baker/ Pifer		*Review of Higher Education*	Spring 2015	

Figure 2.1 Sample worksheet from the Baker-Pifer Research and Publication Plan

My intention for including a section on organizational applications and tools is to get you thinking about the ways in which you can better organize your shortand long-term goals (and corresponding outputs), which can include collaborations with colleagues, as you seek to have a clearer path toward promotion. The project plan headings and mechanisms I have used (and continue to use) may not align with your institutional expectations or disciplinary norms. But you can take these templates and ideas and think about how they can be adapted and adopted to meet your personal needs and expectations as well as those that are predetermined for you professionally.