



The SAGE Encyclopedia of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 2nd edition

Succeeding in Academic Careers in Industrial and Organizational Psychology

Contributors: Jason J. Dahling

Book Title: The SAGE Encyclopedia of Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 2nd edition

Chapter Title: "Succeeding in Academic Careers in Industrial and Organizational Psychology"

Pub. Date: 2017

Access Date: November 29, 2016

Publishing Company: SAGE Publications, Inc

City: Thousand Oaks

Print ISBN: 9781483386898

Online ISBN: 9781483386874

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483386874.n530>

Print pages: 1551-1553

©2017 SAGE Publications, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

This PDF has been generated from SAGE Knowledge. Please note that the pagination of the online version will vary from the pagination of the print book.

Academic careers in industrial and organizational (I-O) psychology typically involve tenure-track, full-time faculty positions in colleges and universities. Because tenured academics have considerable job autonomy that allows them to pursue their own interests, the specific accomplishments that constitute a “successful” career will naturally vary among academics who have different goals. Furthermore, the relative importance of certain accomplishments to a given person may change over the span of his or her career due to shifting interests and priorities. Thus, the nature of success in academia is in many ways self-determined.

Despite these complexities, most I-O academics and their employers conceptualize *success* as demonstrated excellence in several important performance domains: teaching, advising and mentoring, scholarship, professional service, community service, and collaboration or consulting with industry. The relative importance of each of these domains varies across people and jobs. For example, success in some domains, such as teaching and scholarship, is usually mandatory to attain tenure and promotion to higher ranks as a faculty member, although many I-O academics pursue continued achievement in these domains beyond the requirements set by their employers to satisfy their own intrinsic career goals. In contrast, success in other domains, such as community service, is less commonly required for tenure and promotion, but is nevertheless an important part of a meaningful career for many I-O academics. Although I-O academics therefore differ in the performance domains that they hold to be most important, they share a common need to carefully balance these career aspirations with their personal lives; a consideration of work–life balance is an easily overlooked component of a successful, sustainable academic career.

Teaching

I-O academics usually have teaching responsibilities within psychology departments or business schools, where they teach a variety of courses concerning personnel decisions and the social–psychological context of the workplace. These courses may reside within undergraduate and/or graduate curricula, and the specific courses that a person teaches are usually dictated by some combination of individual expertise and program needs. Success in the teaching domain generally involves having a positive impact on students’ learning, skill development, and attitudes toward the field. This impact is most often assessed via student or peer evaluations of teaching effectiveness during the course or immediately after its completion. However, teaching success may manifest in longer-term outcomes, such as the job and graduate school placements that are attained by students as a consequence of their preparation in the classroom.

Success in the teaching domain may also involve broader pedagogical achievements. For example, successful teaching may involve developing new courses or academic programs (e.g., a minor or certificate program) that fulfill institutional needs and attract new students to the field. I-O academics can also leverage their knowledge of training principles and instructional design to help other faculty develop courses and grow as instructors.

Mentoring and Advising

Outside of the classroom, I-O academics work closely with undergraduate and/or graduate students in advising and mentoring relationships. Advising is typically a required duty for academics; a set of student advisees are assigned to the faculty member, who is responsible for assisting with the students’ progression through their degree program. Advising may also

include broader direction to students in the form of general career advice or referrals to other campus resources, such as tutoring or counseling services. In contrast, mentoring is typically voluntary and involves a deeper, individualized relationship with a student to advance his or her career and personal development. Mentoring relationships tend to emerge when student protégés share similar interests and career aspirations with a faculty mentor that form the basis for a closer professional connection. Success in this domain is usually operationalized in terms of the positive outcomes that a faculty member's advisees and protégés experience that can be attributed to the faculty member's support. These outcomes might include scholarly products, job and graduate school placements, or personal development (e.g., a growth in self-confidence or an improvement in technical skills that stems from close mentoring). However, I-O academics also benefit from these relationships, and they frequently experience satisfaction from making a lasting, significant impact on the lives of their advisees and protégés.

Scholarship

Generating new knowledge through scholarly activity is a core responsibility for I-O academics. Success in this domain is usually a function of both the quantity and quality of one's scholarly output. I-O academics disseminate their scholarship through a variety of mechanisms, including presentations at professional conferences, authored books or chapters in edited volumes, and, most commonly, journal articles. Peer-reviewed journal publications tend to be the most valued form of scholarly output, particularly when those publications are in journals that are highly selective and respected within the field. Some institutions, especially business schools, rank or categorize journals to clarify the relative value of publishing in various outlets for their faculty. Publishing extensively in top-tier journals is a widely recognized indicator of success for I-O academics in the scholarly domain. However, scholarly impact can be operationalized in many ways, and some work published in less prestigious journals may be important because it has value to industry, attracts media attention, or captures layperson interest that brings positive publicity to one's research program and employer.

Academics usually need financial and physical resources to conduct their scholarship, and securing those resources is important to being successful in the scholarship domain. Resources are typically acquired with monetary grants that support the execution of projects. Some colleges and universities offer small, internal grant mechanisms to fund modest projects, but more significant projects require a degree of funding that can only be provided by external agencies. Some external agencies are private foundations or corporations that award grants for scholarship that supports their mission or objectives, while other external agencies are large public-sector organizations, such as the National Science Foundation (NSF). Regularly applying for and receiving grants is an increasingly important mark of success in academia because grants can do more than fund ambitious research projects; grants also provide overhead money to one's employing university, support student research assistants, and enable the permanent acquisition of research equipment that can benefit departmental peers. Research-intensive graduate universities consequently place a strong emphasis on securing grants, whereas grants may be less important to career success at other types of colleges and universities, such as primarily undergraduate institutions (PUIs) that have more modest expectations for scholarly productivity.

Professional Service

Professional service involves work that I-O academics perform for their employers and/or for professional bodies within the field, such as the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP). Examples of service contributions within a college or university include membership on a committee that reviews and approves new courses, or membership on the institutional review board (IRB) that oversees research ethics. Examples of service contributions to the profession include conducting reviews for scholarly journals and volunteering to help coordinate a professional conference. Some level of professional service is typically required of all academics to earn tenure and promotion, but many people take on additional professional service because they find the work and the opportunity to exercise their skills valuable. Indeed, I-O academics bring valuable administrative, quantitative, and leadership skills that allow them to make important contributions to the organizations that they serve.

Success in the domain of professional service typically involves making a more significant, lasting impact on the groups that one serves. Academics can make more significant contributions by progressing to positions of leadership or responsibility that align with their talents and interests. For example, significant service might involve editing a journal, chairing an academic department, serving in the faculty senate, or being elected to office in a professional group, such as SIOP. Advanced service responsibilities such as these are time-consuming, and academics must be careful to avoid overcommitment that threatens success in other domains. However, when managed appropriately, professional service is an important aspect of a successful academic career that can have a positive impact on one's peers and the field.

Community Service

I-O academics may also make service contributions outside of the profession and their home institutions. The allied field of humanitarian work psychology developed to study the ways that I-O psychologists can be important drivers of social change at the local, national, and global levels by sharing their knowledge of human resources and organizational effectiveness. Community service performed by I-O academics can focus at a local level (e.g., by helping small nonprofit organizations, like food kitchens or animal shelters) or take a broader scope (e.g., by providing expert consultancy to government agencies). Although community service is rarely required to earn tenure and promotion, many I-O academics look for opportunities to volunteer in the community because they possess rare, valuable skills that can make a positive impact on community groups that could otherwise not afford such expertise. Success in this domain is a function of the benefits experienced by the community organizations that I-O academics volunteer to help.

Industry Collaboration and Consulting

Some I-O academics also work closely with organizations in the private or public sector. This work may take a variety of forms and include scholarly collaborations with practitioners and the provision of specialized consulting services separate from one's primary job in academia. Many I-O academics find these connections with industry to be an important part of a successful career because I-O psychologists are trained as scientist-practitioners who both generate and apply psychological knowledge. Industry collaborations and consulting provide the opportunity to apply new ideas and gain fresh insights into the priorities of businesspeople, which can be valuable even for academics whose primary interests and responsibilities lie elsewhere.

Success in the domain of collaboration and consulting can take many forms and usually yields benefits for both the academic and his or her partners in industry. For example, collaborations can lead to high-fidelity research studies that yield influential, jointly authored publications. Similarly, consulting oftentimes leads to business insights and improvements that benefit clients, while simultaneously yielding income, networking opportunities, and insights for academics. These insights can enhance an academic's performance in other domains, such as teaching, by providing real-world examples that can be shared with students. Although industry collaborations and consulting are rarely required to earn tenure and promotion, pursuing these opportunities can become an important part of a successful career in academia.

Work–Life Balance

In addition to achieving success in substantive domains related to academia, I-O academics have to be mindful of their work–life balance. Because academics perform their work in a largely autonomous and self-directed manner, they are sometimes prone to overinvesting in work domains to a degree that threatens their nonwork lives. Academics can easily initiate too many research projects, volunteer for too many committees, or pour too much time into working with students, advisees, and protégés. In addition to threatening the quality of their work, these overinvestments can create negative spillover into the home domain. Academics may feel stressed or irritable at home, or lack the time to meaningfully engage with family members, friends, and personal pursuits. Consequently, many accomplished academics have learned that declining some opportunities and making short-term sacrifices in productivity can actually contribute to long-term career success; when academics create and protect time to focus on their personal relationships, physical and mental health, and hobbies that let them recover from work stress, they tend to return to work in a more productive state of mind.

Jason J. Dahling

See also [Academic Careers in Industrial and Organizational Psychology](#); [Career Success](#); [Careers for Industrial and Organizational Psychologists](#); [Funding Sources for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Research](#); [Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Poverty Reduction, and Prosocial Initiatives](#); [Preparing for Academic Careers in Industrial and Organizational Psychology](#); [Scientist–Practitioner Model](#); [Work–Life Balance](#)

Further Readings

Darley, J. M., Zanna, M. P., & Roediger, H. L., III (Eds.). (2003). *The compleat academic: A career guide* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

DeNeef, A. L., & Goodwin, C. D. (Eds.). (2007). *The academic's handbook* (3rd ed.). Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Hedge, J. W., & Borman, W. C. (Eds.). (2008). *The I-O consultant: Advice and insights for building a successful career*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Olson-Buchanan, J., Bryan, L. K., & Thompson, L. F. (Eds.). (2013). *Using industrial-organizational psychology for the greater good: Helping those who help others*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Zelin, A. I., Oliver, J., Doverspike, D., Chau, S., Bynum, B., & Poteet, M. L. (2015). Identifying the competencies, critical experiences, and career paths of I-O psychologists: Academia. *The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist*, 52(3), 149–157.

Jason J. Dahling

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781483386874.n530>

10.4135/9781483386874.n530