HOW DO YOU DEFINE SUCCESS IN ACADEMIA?
WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?
INSTRUMENTAL AREAS

• Grant funding as PI and Co-I
• Regular/consistent publications
• Promotion (by steps & levels)
• Professional recognition at various levels, e.g., locally, nationally, internationally
WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?
PERSONAL SATISFACTION

• Success is to be continuously employed doing what I really like to do
• Doing research/work that brings you joy
• Working on what interests/motivates/compels you
• Continuous learning and gaining expertise
• Helping/watching your mentees succeed
• Having strong and satisfying collegial relationships
• Having a reputation for being helpful and collegial with colleagues,
• Being well respected interpersonally
• Being kind to people and always be willing to help if you can because that leaves you with close colleagues and the satisfaction of contributing to others work
WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?
IMPACT OF THE WORK

• Results of research are implemented outside the research context
• See some impact among the people for whom I do the work, whether it’s patients, trainees, staff, or community
• Improving lives of others through research and waking up (most days) wanting to work on improving lives of others through research
• Making a real difference in policy/practice/people's lives
CONCERNS – CAN I GET THERE?

- Will I be able to fund myself for my entire career?
- Competing clinical or teaching responsibilities and lack of protected time/financial support to complete research
- I’m worried I’ll get worn down by the rejection of grants and paper writing
- Struggles with academic writing
- Will my work ever be fully embraced by the NIH/academic medicine model?
- There is a constant feeling of having to fight systems of oppression in academia and deal with personal feelings of discouragement when change is slow
- Burnout – the emotional toll of doing work on health equity/health disparities
STRATEGIES TO GET THERE: COLLABORATIONS

• Create strong collaborations to help with grants, funding, and academic progress
• Recognize your strengths and weaknesses, play to your own strengths, find colleagues with complementary strengths and weaknesses.
• A strong research identity (a coherent program of research)
• Have a wide range of interests—it leads to diversity in funding and collaborations, ongoing intellectual growth
• Don't be flaky; stick to your commitments (so, don't overcommit)
• Be embedded in communities—it's good for impact, and for recharging one's own battery, and helps you keep perspective about what's important
STRATEGIES TO GET THERE: 
BE OPEN TO OPPORTUNITIES AND CHANGE

• Continue seeking training and career development opportunities – you never know where that will lead you

• Be flexible---things may not go the way you plan, but when they don’t, there may be an opportunity to do something innovative

• Remember: you are in the driver’s seat of your career, change it up if you’re not satisfied and have a plan B

• Say “no” to things that don’t bring you joy or advance your agenda; practice with easy/low-risk things

• Have confidence in and follow your heart/gut; don't listen to one-size-fits-all prescriptions about what 'success' looks like
STRATEGIES TO GET THERE: SOME NITTY GRITTY

- Writing skills are essential
  - Set aside writing time on your calendar; make it non-negotiable
  - Get editing help – seek out resources on campus; pay for professional editor
  - Form a writing group with your peers
- Verbal presentation skills are essential:
  - practice,
  - seek out feedback and coaching
- Use consultants and workshops: writing, graphic design, public speaking, leadership
STRATEGIES TO GET THERE: SOME NITTY GRITTY

• Start grant proposals and papers early; waiting until the last minute is stressful for you and everyone around you

• Seek out databases or resources outside of your Division/Department, outside of UCSF

• Seek out career mentorship beyond your immediate chief/chair – from leaders and from others outside of your division/department: ask to meet annually

• Seek out constructive feedback; others are invested in your success, you don’t have to do everything on your own

• Find spaces that feel safe where you don’t have to ‘code-switch’
STRATEGIES TO GET THERE: SELF-CARE

• Surround yourself with good people -- good at what they do, and good human beings with positive energy

• Love your work, love your colleagues, don’t worry if the world doesn’t seem to love you back – they might just not ‘get it’ yet

• Open reviewer feedback on grant proposals and manuscripts when it arrives, look at it quickly, and then set it aside for a few days; ask a trusted colleague to help you read through it so you have support

• Don’t let others with outsized egos get under your skin

• Know that you have made it this far, so you are already highly qualified and successful---value yourself and your contributions

• Take vacation and actually disconnect from email and other work communications: it is important to recharge
“How you define success in the future may be very different from how you define it now; be open to that--if you are following your heart, then such shifts are successes, not failures”

---Steve Gregorich, PhD and CADC sage