A large, stylized orange arrow graphic pointing to the right, composed of several parallel lines of varying thickness, creating a sense of depth and movement. It is positioned on the left side of the slide.

**NAVIGATING A CAREER IN ACADEMIA
FROM APPLICATION TO PRE-TENURE
AND EARLY-TENURE:
LESSONS LEARNED ALONG THE WAY**

NAZANIN BASSIRI-GHARB

G. W. WOODRUFF SCHOOL OF MECHANICAL ENGINEERING
SCHOOL OF MATERIALS SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING



THE APPLICATION PROCESS

SO IT BEGINS...

CREATING THE NEXT®



TOO MANY OPTIONS, AND YET...

- Are you sure you want to do this?
 - Are your curiosity driven?
 - Great in setting your own timelines?
 - Great communication skills? (science does NOT always talk!)
 - ...have you considered your alternatives?
- Be strategic:
 - Build your resume
 - Seek out new experiences (collaborate!):
 - Other departments
 - Industrial collaborations
 - International visits



“The more curious you are, the more creative you will be.”

TOO MANY OPTIONS, AND YET...

- Be strategic:
 - Let people know you are looking
 - Have an elevator pitch at the ready
 - Identify your best fit → Talk to people that work in your dream institution(s):
 - Do they like their jobs?
 - Do they match your idea of good colleagues?
 - What is their department's priority? Their vision?
 - Build relationships!
 - Build more relationships...
 - Be open to different opportunities

IS THERE AN OPENING THAT YOU LIKE?

- Call up someone that you know there or someone that knows someone there:
 - Do they have any insight about what the department is specifically looking for?
 - Anything that might not be in the call?
 - LISTEN!
- Revisit your CV with in mind where you are applying
 - Important stuff first: after education, awards and publications
- Target your Research statement to the specific call
 - What sets you apart from your past advisors?
 - What will make you uniquely successful there?
- Target your Teaching statement to the specific institution
- Call up your contacts again and let them know you are applying

**YOU HAVE LANDED THAT
DREAM JOB... AND NOW?**

THE TENURE-TRACK YEARS



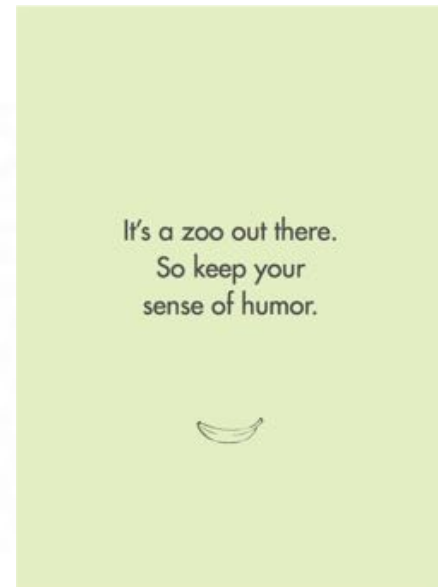
- Learn the rules :
 - Faculty handbook
 - Trusted mentors (at your institution AND outside)
 - People that have just gone through the tenure and/or critical review
- Have a plan B, C, D, and work towards them too...
- Don't work for tenure! Do your best ...because not everything will go according to plan!
- Build your support system
 - Fellow tenure-track faculty
 - People outside "work"

MAKING A NAME FOR YOURSELF

- Know your strengths:
 - What makes you a technical expert for funding/as a prospective collaborator?
 - What will make you really unique?
- Go for all the low-hanging fruit
 - Will help you get those publications while setting up the bigger framework...
 - But don't compromise on quality
- Get out of your comfort zone (try plan Z!)
 - Try that crazy idea that you have (after thinking it through)
 - Do what you can on your own, but there are many ways of trying things cheaply too (trusted network)

NETWORK, SOCIALIZE, BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

- Trusted Network (technical and non-technical):
 - Make strategic alliances. Who would have the expertise to help you make it to the next level?
 - Offer as much as ask.
 - Get other people on board, even if they will not be collaborators right away (make sure they are trustworthy).
- Get to know “others”:
 - “your people”: get involved in your professional society/ies
 - “other people”: go to talks out of your field of expertise (think differently from others in your field).



"Keep Curious and Carry a Banana: Words of Wisdom from the World of Curious George," H.A. Rey (2016)

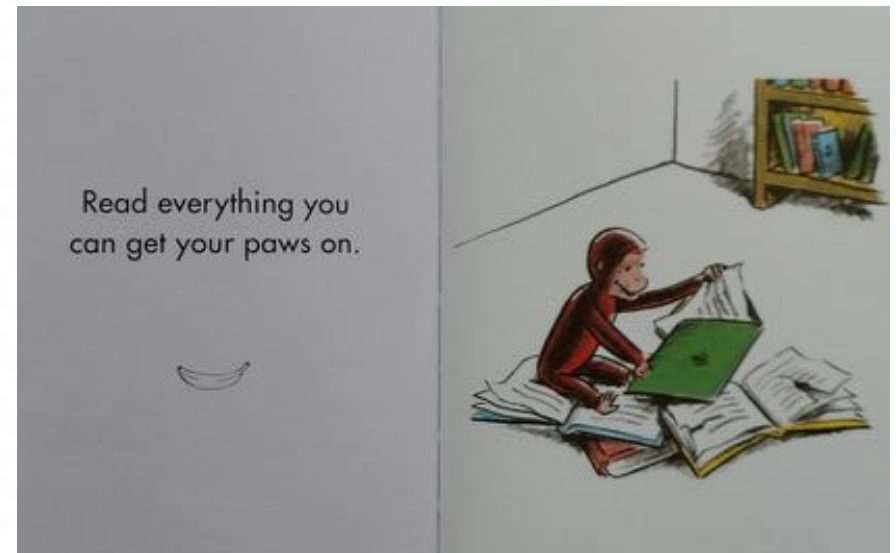


**CONGRATULATIONS!
YOU GOT TENURED**

... NOW WHAT?

EARLY POST-TENURE

- Watch out for the slump! (post adrenaline rush is a crash)
- Challenge yourself again
 - If you can, go for a sabbatical
 - Get involved in more collaborative work
 - Get more involved in your professional societies
 - Go after bigger and crazier ideas
 - Help and mentor others along their path
 - Don't hold back



"Keep Curious and Carry a Banana: Words of Wisdom from the World of Curious George," H.A. Rey (2016)

MAKE SURE YOU ENJOY THE RIDE...

Working in academia is not
about having a plan.

It is about having natural
curiosity and the capacity to
adapt and thrive within a
situation that you have got
yourself into...

WHEN YOU'RE
CURIIOUS,
FUN HAS A
WAY OF JUST
SHOWING UP.

- Curious George



Margret and H. A. Rey

You can find a copy of this presentation at smartlab.gatech.edu

HONE YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH



Under-two minutes: You have two minutes. Keep it short, and...go!

- **Introduce yourself...** obviously...
- **The problem:** one sentence to explain your research
- **Why it matters:** What is the major question/problem you are tackling
- **Your solution:** How are YOU answering this question?
- **Why does this matter?** This is the punchline... you will save the World obviously, but also...
- Leave them with an **action item.**