



Thoughts on an academic endoscopy career

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My reasons for pursuing an academic career as an endoscopic investigator are several ([Video 1](#), available online at www.VideoGIE.org). I have an opportunity to work with both my hands and my mind; I have been able to collaborate with bright engineers to invent devices; I have developed some great friendships in the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. Sometimes I feel like a child who has gotten to play with cutting-edge technology, but most importantly, I have had a chance to care for patients while experiencing the sheer joy of endoscopy.

An academic endoscopist has to be a triple threat, excelling in clinical care, teaching, and research. My advice to trainees considering an academic career is to first learn about promotion and tenure. Each academic institution has its own specific criteria for promotion. Learn what your institution expects from you. There is a yin and yang of clinical care at an academic institution. Endoscopists starting their academic careers have to learn not to say “No” to cases, but they have to protect time for teaching and research; they should be eager to take on challenging cases but know their own limitations; and most importantly, they have to be available for their patients but should also protect time with their own families. To excel clinically in interventional endoscopy, it is imperative to be trained properly in a fourth-tier program. Graduating interventional fellows should join institutions where they can practice the skills they learn. In an academic career, it is important to develop a focus of specialization. It is also important to continually acquire new skills by attending conferences, observing other colleagues, and visiting other academic units.

To excel as a teacher, an academic endoscopist has to master endoscopic skills and be able to teach other trainees. Teaching is the final step of learning. It requires patience. It is best for those starting an academic career to remember their own teachers who were patient when they themselves struggled. Teaching requires time and effort. It requires innovation—excelling in clinical care and research-enabled excellence in teaching. Finally, the best teachers demand the most from their students, but they are prepared for less.

Finally, as trainees begin their academic careers, they will develop their own research programs. Ideas for research come from daily endoscopic practice. Investigators identify questions that excite them. Taking classes in epidemiology and biostatistics can help endoscopists learn study design to answer endoscopic questions. Most importantly, at the start of an academic career, it is imperative to find the right mentor who can guide a junior colleague in writing grants, choosing projects, protecting time, and pursuing academic activities. A mentor is an envisionser, an energizer, and someone who supports a junior colleague and guides that colleague to success. The mentee also has obligations in respecting the relationship with the mentor and assuming responsibility for his or her own development. Successful funding is important for pursuing research. Finally, it is important to publish your research. Publishing is the only way to communicate ideas and to advance endoscopic practice.

To conclude, academic endoscopy is a calling. It can be extremely gratifying to make a contribution to endoscopic practice while providing the best care to patients. Academic endoscopists are obligated to teach their skills to trainees. They must pursue their ideas and innovation with passion. Finally, to succeed in endoscopic research they should find a mentor, turn their ideas into grants, execute their research projects, and publish the findings.

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