



Sean Gerrity
English Department

ADVICE FOR THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SCHOLAR

Advice for Conducting Research as Junior Faculty member at Hostos

Back in February, I published an article in *Inside Higher Ed* called “Advice for the Community College Scholar,” in which I provided five concrete steps that community-college faculty might take to advance their research agendas while working with a heavy teaching load. Here, I hope to offer some suggestions more specific to junior faculty members at Hostos, all of whom are required to conduct research as part of their advancement toward tenure and eventually promotion to both associate and full professor. I come to Hostos from a particular type of academic trajectory, one in which I was expected to develop a robust and specific research agenda, and to pursue it aggressively throughout and after graduate school, culminating in a dissertation from which peer-reviewed journal articles and potentially a book might result. I hope, however, that my advice can transcend my own disciplinary experiences and be of use to all junior faculty members beginning their professional academic careers at Hostos. Below, I detail five specific strategies for meeting your research requirements as a junior faculty member at Hostos.

If you have a pre-existing research agenda, pursue it, or use it as a jumping off point for related research.

If you come from a field where you wrote a dissertation or master’s thesis, these are obviously the best places to start. You might revise individual chapters or sections into articles to submit to peer-reviewed journals. Given the length of these articles and the long process involved with peer review and publication for longer pieces, you’ll want to begin planning and work on this

right away. Some folks at Hostos have managed to publish books, whether they are works of scholarship or creative works. This can be a challenge, but if it’s of interest, seeking out those people and asking their advice is a perfect place to start--again, sooner rather than later, given the extraordinary amount of time it takes for books to get published, especially academic ones.

Expand the type of research you are doing by considering SoTL, pedagogy journals, and publications related to the profession.

Many faculty at Hostos across departments and units are engaged in SoTL-based research and publication. Every semester I’ve been here, at least one workshop has been held on SoTL, or Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. SoTL essentially understands our classrooms and teaching experiences as sources of scholarly research. All of us, regardless, of discipline, spend a lot of time in the classroom, so SoTL can be a productive way of generating publications out of that activity which we spend most of our time doing as Hostos faculty members.

Use your junior faculty release time strategically, in the ways that best align with your workflow and goals.

As I’m sure everyone knows, by contract we are all granted 25 hours of junior faculty release time to be used during our first five years on the tenure track. I recommend designing a five-year plan (as part of your seven-year tenure plan) that imagines how you might use this release time to accomplish your specific research goals. While teaching 27 hours, I’ve found that teaching my 15 hours in the fall and 12 hours in the spring has been best for my research output. By teaching 12 hours in the spring, and by taking more release time then, I’ve been able to jumpstart projects that I can continue

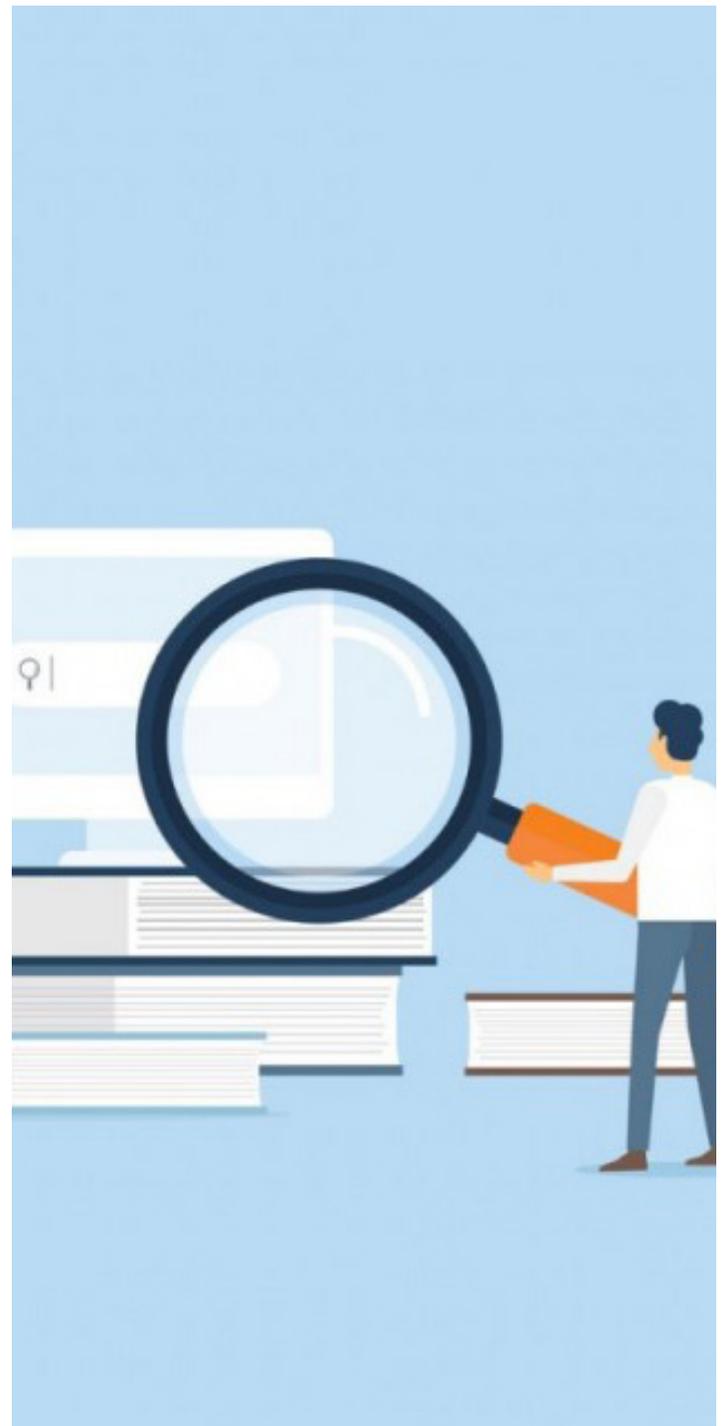
into the summer, especially when supported in the summer by a PSC-CUNY Grant. When our workload soon changes to 24 hours per year, I still plan to teach the full 12 hours in the fall and reserve release time for the spring semesters.

Your best resource is your colleagues. Find colleagues to collaborate with, whether in your department/unit, outside of it, or both.

Take advantage of the wonderful sense of camaraderie and community that Hostos has to offer among its faculty members. Inevitably, there are already informal writing and reading groups meeting within and across disciplines at the college. Ask around and see what's happening. Talk to folks who have been here for five years, or seven years, about how they planned out and accomplished their research goals. Find like-minded colleagues to start writing accountability groups with. In essence, remember that you are not alone in this process--all of us are responsible for producing research, so it's something everyone is thinking about and doing. Collaborative work is also a great way to increase your visibility across the college, and to demonstrate collegiality with colleagues both within your own department/unit and across Hostos, which is also expected when we go up for tenure.

Apply for all of the grant, fellowship, and release time opportunities you can.

CUNY offers many opportunities for research grants, fellowships, and release time to pursue scholarship. The Grants Office at Hostos and the RFCUNY website are great places to start when you're interested in exploring these things. So far, I've found the PSC-CUNY Summer Grants, Community College Research Grant, William Stewart Travel Award, Research in the Classroom Grant, FFPP (Faculty Fellowship Publication Program), and OAA funding for conference travel to be some options worth looking into. Again, speak with colleagues who have been successful in receiving these grants. Most everyone is happy to share their application materials to help guide you toward finding your own successes.



BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

Sean Gerrity has been an Assistant Professor in the English department at Hostos since the spring of 2017. He has published his research in both peer-reviewed and popular publications. He regularly presents at the Modern Language Association conference and is at work on a book manuscript called "A Canada in the South: Maroons in American Literature."