Tips for navigating a successful and rewarding career

Louise Ryan
Some sources

Statistical Science Conversations --- I like the one I did with Nan Laird a few years ago: 
https://projecteuclid.org/download/pdfview_1/euclid.ss/1449670859

A podcast I did with the Australian Research Council Centre for Excellence in Mathematical and Statistical Frontiers: 
First, a brief history of me!

- Born Murwillumbah (date unspecified!), raised in Bega – both very small Australian country towns
- Undergrad at Macquarie University (started actuarial, switched to stats and maths), graduated 1978
- PhD at Harvard Stats (1983)
- Postdoc (1983) then faculty (1985) at Harvard Biostatistics, ending up as department chair in 2006
- Returned home as Chief of CSIRO Mathematics and Information Sciences in January 2009
- Joined UTS as Distinguished Professor in August 2012
- Today living much of the time in Cairns (tropical north), part time UTS. Lots of cycling and fun these days 😊
Is planning important?

Of course some planning helps …. BUT
• Over-planning might cause you to miss opportunity – the future is hard to predict!
• The future is hard to predict!
• Life happens ..... 

Personally, I like to have a loose plan in mind for the short to immediate term (<5 years) and then be open to opportunities as they arise
So what to do instead?

• Work hard, seek excellence, seek knowledge
• Hone your communication skills (written and oral)
• Make sure you are in a positive environment with lots of mentors you can learn from and emulate
• Find something you care about
• Identify your strengths and weaknesses -- find a path(s) that minimizes impact of weaknesses and lets your strengths shine*
• Be open to opportunity and willing to adapt your life plan – don’t always pick the “safe” option
• But, know the “rules” --- how you will be judged/evaluated

* Knowing strengths and weakness is part of general self-awareness, which is important! Tons has been written on it in context of job hunting strategies --- https://www.glassdoor.com/blog/guide/strengths-and-weaknesses/
Find something that gives you passion

Working super hard over a 40+ year career is hard! You need *really* good motivation to keep you going ..... 

• Tap into something with personal meaning for you 

• This can include non-technical things 
  o Students and/or teaching 
  o Collaborations 
  o Involvement in the professional societies
Importance of good collaborations and being in a stimulating environment

• Critical for me since I never like working “solo”
• Technical versus applied collaborations – both very important, but also very different
• Good collaborators become professional friends

If you are in a place where you have some great collaborations, be very careful of disrupting that through change! Don’t underestimate the importance of environment in helping you thrive
Why (Bio)Statistics can lead to such a great career

To quote one of my heros, John Tukey, “statistics allows us to play in everyone's backyard”

Theory and methods

Practice

For me, the sweet spot involves a blend of both
The virtuous cycle of collaboration

Engagement in real world problem solving

Motivation, Inspiration & ideas

Better solutions

New theories and methods
Professional societies

• Networking
• Impact
• Travel

How to get involved?

• To start, just go to meetings!
• Organize sessions
• Serve on committees
• Be a great reviewer for journals and eventually you will be an Editor!
Balance, balance, balance

• Seek a good balance of methods, application, teaching, professional society work

• Look after your physical and mental health
  o Friends and family
  o Hobbies and interests
  o Exercise
  o Healthy destressing

In my opinion, it is NOT possible to have everything. Life inevitably involves some tradeoffs .....
"I'M A LITTLE SURPRISED, WITH SUCH EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE IN PREDICTIVE ANALYSIS, YOU SHOULD'VE KNOWN WE WOULDN'T HIRE YOU."

Thanks for Listening!!