

bonds with her tenure-track colleagues. Ultimately, though, she was the only one to get tenure.

It tore those relationships apart and left Hadly with something akin to survivor's guilt. "We were all very close, had written grants together," she says. "I considered them respected colleagues."

They did have one thing in common, she recalls — they all channelled their emotions into finding new opportunities. A few got jobs at other research institutions and one went on to be incredibly successful in business. "People land on their feet quickly if they are well known and well regarded," Hadly says.

### MOVING FORWARD

Ultimately, those denied tenure have to move on — and that generally means seeking out a faculty position elsewhere. Search committees will, understandably, want to know what happened.

Candidates should therefore be sure to understand why they were denied tenure and be able to present the setback in context. Bohannan says that the people he has seen weather tenure denial made clear to prospective employers why they were denied tenure to counter the perception of subpar performance. For example, if a candidate's publication record is thin, but they have multiple publications in the pipeline, they could argue that the decision was premature.



**"Young faculty need to find their own personal strength to express their point of view."**

Lisa Graumlich

Colleagues can help. When writing letters for people who have been denied tenure, Cook says, she focuses on the strengths of the candidate, their research record, teaching accomplishments and the role that they have in the institution. Those skills don't just disappear, and other universities are often only too happy to scoop up high-quality candidates.

Life in academia can go on after a tenure denial (see 'Moving on'). "Almost everyone in the academy knows wonderful stories of people who got denied and found the right home," says University of California vice-provost Susan Carlson. "It's certainly not the end of the road." ■

Virginia Gewin is a freelance writer in Portland, Oregon.

## TURNING POINT

# Joel Elmquist

*Like most great mentors, Joel Elmquist points to his past advisers as exemplars of good guidance. Elmquist, winner of the 2014 US National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) mentoring award and a neurologist at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, hopes that he can lead by example and pass on the importance of good mentorship to his protégés. He received his award on 4 April at Washington University in St Louis.*



UT SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL CENTER

### What made your mentors so valuable?

I learned different things from each. My graduate-school adviser basically taught me how to be a scientist — how to design an experiment, how to establish a good control. My postdoc adviser gave me the freedom to do what I wanted, but was always there if I needed his input. He also instilled in me the importance of writing, because scientists are evaluated, in part, on grants funded and papers published. It is not just about being smart, doing experiments and working hard.

### What tips did you get about writing?

Before I even started my postdoc, my adviser and I wrote a grant application together. I wrote a draft and mailed it to him. He sent it back marked up initially with a green pen and made a note that he had run out of ink and switched to red. At the time, I was distraught, and thought that I was in over my head — he was this famous guy at Harvard and I was just a graduate student sitting in a basement lab at Iowa State University. But he included an encouraging note that said revision is an important part of the process. It was a valuable lesson.

### How do you pass that advice on?

I actively encourage my students and postdocs to write the first draft of a manuscript. I encourage them to get input from other members of the research group. Everyone in my group writes fellowship applications. I always say to my postdocs, if you get a fellowship, it helps with our budget, it helps with your CV and, most importantly, it helps you to learn the art of grant writing.

### Your nomination for the NPA award mentioned your propensity for collaboration. How do you encourage that?

Create an environment in which people are not afraid to disagree about their interpretation of results. The principal investigator has to be generous with authorship. If you need a key collaborator from outside your group,

don't worry about authorship so much that it impedes the progress of the science. It is also really important that you do not have two people from the same group competing. It can be a fine line. I try to have two or three people in my lab working together simultaneously on two or three things. But I try to make sure that they have defined roles and that by working together they will produce synergy rather than competition.

### What is your overall philosophy of mentoring?

Always make time. My postdoc mentor was such a busy guy — department chairman, countless committees, his own research, editor of a major journal. But he was always available when I needed him. He also taught me to be hands-off, unless my postdocs needed help. It is counter-productive to micromanage postdocs. Good mentoring brings in talent, which further perpetuates your lab's success. Prospective postdocs and students look at your papers, of course, but they also look at where people who were in your lab end up.

### How do you encourage good mentorship in your postdocs?

Before they leave, I always sit them down and talk about mentorship. I try to provide good examples, such as how my postdoc adviser was generous not only with his time, but also with his connections. For instance, he helped me to get speaking slots at meetings and got me invited to some of the more important meetings and conferences. I try to do similar things — network on behalf of my trainees. My mentor also taught me to be confident in my skills and to think about what the people in my lab can take with them when they leave. ■

INTERVIEW BY PAUL SMAGLIK