

The Taproot Podcast

Season 6, episode 1

Guest: Dior Kelley

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00:00 **Ivan** Our guest today is Dior Kelley, an assistant professor in the Genetics, Development and Cell Biology department at Iowa State University. Dior received her BS in chemistry from the University of California Santa Cruz in 2000, and her PhD in plant biology from the University of California, Davis, in 2009 before doing an NIH postdoctoral fellowship with Jeff Long at the Salk Institute and a second postdoc with Mark Estelle. She joined her current department as an adjunct assistant professor in 2015 before moving to her current role in 2019.

00:36 **Liz** Our paper today is “*slim shady* is a novel allele PHYTOCHROME B present in the T-DNA line SALK-015201”, and it was published in *Plant Direct* last year. Dior, can you give us a short summary of this paper?

00:53 **Dior** Sure. So in this study, it was a reverse genetic screen that we did looking for novel regulators of auxin-mediated gene expression. We had done proteomics experiments to look at auxin-mediated changes in protein abundance and reshaping the proteome in hypocotyls and roots and in seedlings, and we wanted to follow up and functionally characterize some of these candidate proteins to try to figure out some new regulators of plant growth and development. One of these candidate genes that we had picked out unfortunately had two different alleles with two different phenotypes.

This story was really sort of a way for us to highlight the genetic screen, but also nail down what this particular SALK line (which we affectionately called “slim shady”) was really related to in terms of its genetic function. So in order to figure that out, we were able to use genomic sequencing data, which was available for the mutant to actually pinpoint where the causative allele was. We did really traditional *Arabidopsis* complementation sorts of experiments, non

complementation. We did transcriptomic gene expression analyses to look at what was altered in the mutant. And then also just some really basic phenotype characterization of what was altered.

02:23 **Ivan** I just love this paper. It's such a good reminder of all these basic things about how to do genetics and phenotyping and how to be careful and then understand what's going on and then taking it to the next step. And I think it's a great story about how you leverage genetics to figure out what went wrong with an experiment, but obviously it's never fun to see that you have spent a whole bunch of time pursuing a story that didn't really pan out.

02:53 **Dior** I kept persisting on this because as an assistant professor, we all know that we need publications and I felt that what I had thus far was still going to be appropriate for a journal like *Plant Direct*. I think if there weren't journals like *Plant Direct* and these platforms didn't exist, then I would've had to just drop it in a hot minute and be done with it. Instead, in conversations with the first autho, (the grad student who did the bulk of these studies(who's my first grad student) we kind of kept going back and forth. It wasn't just that we were set back in some ways, it was also that the first author, Linkan, he really doubted himself. He really doubted a lot of his results and a lot of things were not making sense all the time. As a young grad student, that was very, very frustrating. And so we had to kind of carefully just check the books, right, dot our Is and cross all of our Ts. At the same time, I was really, really lucky to have an awesome collaborator, Brian Dilkes, who's also a really strong mentor for me.

04:04 **Liz** And a friend of the podcast.

[Laughter]

04:07 **Dior** And a friend of the podcast who really helps sort of bolster me through this and say, "Let's just get it done and let's just square it away, and let's also use this as a good reminder for folks that maybe have lost their way or made too many assumptions about how easy it is to pluck something off the shelf." This allele had actually been previously published by another group in a very high profile journal and so I felt it was important to get the record straight, while at the same time I had to let go of this fantastic hypothesis that a protein involved in splicing

was gonna be a really cool link for post-transcriptional auxin-regulated gene expression. Maybe if I wasn't an assistant professor who was so hungry for publications, I would've just said, "Alright, that's two years down the drain, whatever."

05:04 **Liz** It's so hard. It's like this whole sunken cost thing that gets people when they're gambling where like you said, I've spent a bunch of time on this. What can we get out of it? How much more time will it be? These are really hard questions and I think we've all nailed it sometimes and really not stuck the landing in other cases. But I think this is a great example of a complete story that, you're right, it's not gonna make it to the cover of *Science*, but is a great mentoring and teaching tool. Now you really know what's going on.

05:44 **Dior** Yeah. I think it's also a really cool example of how there is a wealth of data out there and it comes from different groups at different times. We didn't do the whole genome sequencing on the SALK-015201C line. That was actually done previously by another group randomly for a transposon study. And yet we could go and pull that genomic data - the whole genome. I almost thought at one point, "We'll just spend the money and sequence the genome cuz I wanna know what the mutation is; I can't deal with this anymore," you know? And yet it was already done. We just had to do the data analysis. This is that sort of post genomic world that we're living in where if you have access to these sorts of resources (which may have been creative for some totally different reason), you can still reanalyze that data and make new conclusions from it, which I think is great. And during the pandemic, it was perfect, right? Because we weren't at the bench so much and so we were doing a lot more *in silico* stuff.

Liz I see. I didn't realize this was a pandemic project.

Dior It was a pre- and during. I was a year into my assistant professorship, so it had been going for a year and then things kind of hit a bump.

07:05 **Liz** So you had only been an assistant professor for a year.

Dior Yeah.

Liz Okay. We have to talk about that, what that was like.

[Laughter]

- Ivan** I mean, I had not realized that you guys didn't do the sequencing on this probably cuz I didn't read the paper carefully enough. But it is a great testament to the idea of open data and getting that data out there and making it available for people and just trusting that the universe will find what you're doing important and useful, even if you don't necessarily use your sequencing for that one thing. It warmed my heart to hear you say that that *Plant Direct* was important for this because this is really one of the things we wanted to do with *Plant Direct* was have a place where you could say, "Well, we have to step away from this story. It's not gonna lead to this full project, but we did all this work and we want other people to know about it. It was good work." And maybe it takes a little extra work to get it into the form where you can put it in *Plant Direct*, but at least you have somewhere to deposit the work. The first author gets the chance to write a full paper, go through the review process, get all of those things happening. That makes me happy.
- 08:25 **Liz** I like the part too about just removing the luck part of the equation from getting to have a completed manuscript. I just hate that part where it's like, "Well if it does work out, then you can have a paper, but if we're wrong about our hypothesis, then no paper for you." [Laughs] I'm glad that there are these other ways
- Dior** Yeah, I mean, we lost a cool candidate. We have lots of other cool candidates, but I think also Linkan did cut his teeth on this manuscript - very much so - and so that was a great opportunity and I think it still adds to our scientific body of knowledge.
- 09:09 **Liz** Right. You had only been an assistant professor for a year and then the pandemic hit.
- Dior** That's right.
- Liz** So you are like ground zero for the pandemic effect on tenure. I wanna hear more about that. Tell us what that was like and how you navigated that. Obviously you were able to pivot a little bit with this paper to do a little bit of online digital experiments, but what else happened?

09:45 **Dior** I was an assistant professor for a year in the department. I had my group at the time. Spring when it hit - when we all got completely shut down in March - I was teaching a new course for undergrads. I had a postdoc in the group, a grad student in the group who was the first author on the "slim shady" paper, and then seven undergrads. Immediately only myself and the postdoc were deemed essential to come in and literally just water our plants, right? Whatever we had going that was immediate/urgent. Everything else was completely off limits. I had to pick up a bunch of active research projects that were in different states and try to figure out what was essential, what was not essential, who could do what. It was really a challenge. The first six months were truly hell for me. It was an exhausting emotional rollercoaster.

Liz Cuz you're flipping your class at the same time too,

11:00 **Dior** Yes. It was a new class, so that was really tough. I had luckily had half a semester to build a relationship with the students before that, but it was my first experience teaching online. It was my first time teaching this course. Nothing was perfect and everything was very uncertain, and I was living in a thirty day window because we had to submit requests to do essential work on a certain time clock for myself in the postdoc; this was March. In March I'm also thinking about my maize field season, so I don't only work on *Arabidopsis*, and so it was just all . . . I don't know, completely chaotic. I have a young child at home who also was sent home from preschool during that time.

I was very lucky that I had a year in to have a good working relationship with the people in my group already, to keep in touch with them by email and Zoom and WebEx, but it was tough. It was very, very tough. And then luckily Iowa is one of the places (I don't know luckily or unlucky) we relaxed restrictions very quickly. That fall semester I had previously negotiated as my semester off from teaching because when I was hired I was supposed to get teaching relief and I didn't have it; I was teaching right away. So I sort of serendipitously had that semester off and so I could focus on just keeping the lab going. "What does the lab need?" I had a new student join. I feel like it kind of went in waves of some things getting better and some things becoming more complicated, and always in a rolling

pattern of not knowing what I was going to be able to do three months out or six months out.

13:00 **Liz** That's extra tough for field season. Were you able to get out and get your corn planted?

Dior I think because Iowa is so dependent on corn and soy, we were essentially able to argue that it was essential for agriculture and they approved that summer field season. We got our normal field season in, but it was emotionally and physically very, very challenging because it was myself and really like nobody else in the field. Then like colleagues and collaborators who also grow corn with me (including my husband and our son) [laughing] was out at the field almost every day with us doing pollinations. We had a huge diversity panel that we put out that summer. I mean, it was completely insane.

Some ways I think like how did we get things done at all? And then other ways I think back to how much we were able to accomplish and it's pretty miraculous.

14:13 **Liz** The pros and the cons.

Dior Yep. It's all there together.

Ivan When was your son able to go back to school? When did you stop becoming a full-time daycare along with your full-time teaching and full-time research?

Dior A year later. For the first few months there was no care at all, nothing. And then there was part-time care for six months, and then there was full-time care after that. So it really wasn't until spring of 2021 where I had full-time care again for our son. But then all of the rolling quarantine periods were starting, and I experienced five of those that year. Two weeks we would be home because of potential exposure.

15:06 **Liz** That happened in my household too, but I don't think we had five of them.

Dior His school was very strict on masking and tracing policies, and that was good in retrospect. It still is good, it's good now, but it made it such that I felt every single day this free-floating anxiety. Am I gonna get called as soon as I come into work to go pick up our son? Am I halfway through my lecture and I have to say,

“Alright, our next five meetings are online”? And that sort of back-of-your-brain constant worry that you can't be present and active makes it very difficult. It was very difficult for me anyways, to not feel like I was a hundred percent productive and present.

Liz Oh, you're not alone. You're not alone. It was so, so challenging to be a parent during the pandemic and especially the youngest kids - pre-kindergarten and kindergarten. That's just . . . I can't even imagine.

16:15 **Ivan** Dior, you mentioned your husband is also a faculty member and he started as an assistant professor, I think in 2015.

Dior Yep.

Ivan Around then. So you were sort of able to observe - from the side - somebody going through their first three years as a faculty member and now you've sort of seen yours.

Dior Mm-hmm.

Ivan Obviously the pandemic just sort of shuffles everything, but you're now sort of sitting here three years in. How do you feel that that is different in terms of what you've been able to accomplish versus what he was able to accomplish?

Dior It's really hard to compare some of those differences that he has experienced versus what I've experienced, because I think that so many factors underpin those differences - including gender, including departmental expectations, support structures, and differences in the way that the two of us I think have done our research as young early-career people. Justin is a proteomics guru. He was inherently very, very active in numerous collaborations which I really think helped bolstered a lot of his research program, whereas I'm sort of more of that classical developmental geneticist that wasn't really doing a ton of collaborations initially. But we do talk about this a lot because I think it's impossible not to measure one's trajectory and success compared to somebody else, especially a colleague.

17:59 **Ivan** I'm sure all of those things make a difference, but it also gotta be very hard if you're trying as an assistant professor to build a network to not be able to go to

meetings and not really walk around and talk to people, you know? You and I saw each other at the maize meeting for the first time in three years in March. The thing that was so clear to me is that we can make up for the talks. I saw plenty of talks during the pandemic, but that interaction of what's the casual conversations, just sitting around seeing what people are doing and getting to know people. It's so hard to do in the pandemic and, looking back, so critical for me in establishing my research and my lab.

Dior I think it's all of those sorts of qualitative experiences, the more social aspects of bringing seminar speakers to your department to interact with them there, going to meetings. A lot of those other things that expand your professional network that are totally absent during that pandemic period. I was lucky that I did give some virtual talks. It's not really the same, but then again it did support a few things of collaboration and colleagues. It's not perfect, but I'm grateful for what I was able to do.

19:22 **Liz** I think anyone who's paying attention knows that the pandemic just hammered pre-tenure faculty for all in all of these ways that we've discussed, and especially pre-tenure faculty with children or with pre-existing medical conditions. Institutions have been trying to respond to that. I know, for example, Wash U gave everybody an extra year to tenure mm-hmm. What was available to you?

Dior ISU has offered a tenure clock extension program. The policy was you could apply any time for that one-year COVID-19 tenure clock extension with really no real justification needed. You could just say, "I'm an assistant professor; I'm gonna apply for it," and they would approve it. I think I am the only assistant professor in my department who didn't take it - who didn't do that. That was it. That was the only thing that ISU offered. If you got a tenure clock extension, you could then ask for an extension of your startup funds, in terms of the time that it needs to be spent. Otherwise they have a very hard three-year window. Then it's Cinderella and it's gone.

20:43 **Liz** Why didn't you take the extension yourself?

Dior Well, I didn't take the extension because,

A) it wasn't gonna extend the time I had to spend my startup money. I still would've basically ran out of money with one year extra still to go. And it didn't really make any sense to me to do that.

B) I felt like I was still being productive enough to stay on track. I was still teaching, I was still publishing, I still was actively training research personnel in the lab. All of my metrics were good, so I felt like I was still on track.

Also, I am early career but I'm old. I have been doing so many other . . . I don't wanna call it “purgatory positions”, but I will. I've been in purgatory for so long. [Laughs] I was an adjunct assistant professor for years. I did two postdocs. I never thought it was going to take that long from when I finished my PhD to be a tenure-track professor, so I don't wanna delay promotion in tenure another year because I feel like I've been delaying it for so long already.

21:58 **Liz** There's the stability that comes with tenure. There's the cache. There's a (for the podcast listeners, I'm making quote marks) huge raise that comes. Like the biggest raise you'll get in your career if you stay at one institution is when you get tenure. There's a lot to be said for it. I feel mixed about the delays to tenure because I feel like it's cheap for the university. The university saves money by giving everybody an extra year, and then nobody has to reconfigure what tenure means or what they're expecting people to do. It's just like, throw another year at them, save some money, and then we'll just return to the way things always have been.

22:49 **Dior** I think it's very true, and I think it's just delaying promotion in tenure, but it doesn't really but it maintains expectations. I think the maintaining expectations is where the mindset really needs to shift, because I think that's the whole problem. These support structures that are supposedly in place are not really actually supportive. There were some great articles and analyses and data that I even forwarded on to administrators and said, “Hey, here's a fantastic article of possible things we could implement here at ISU which would support our assistant professors through this time,” and it was just crickets, you know? Nothing beyond a tenure clock extension was imaginable to them.

23:37 **Liz** What are some of the ideas in there? Sorry to interrupt you, but what are some of the ideas that were in those articles?

Dior Some of them included either flexible work schedules or change in your position responsibility statement in order to better balance out your portfolio of what you're able to manage (especially if you're now the caregiver for someone at home), essentially providing extra funds.

I was paying people for six months to work in the lab off of my startup. I was paying a postdoc and a grad student and a handful of undergrads. They were not working in the lab full time. I cannot ever get that money back. That's a lot of money, right? One thing is to . . . I mean, some people looked and said, "Okay, you spent six months, we'll give you an extra six months chunk because we know that that wasn't an effective time for that fund."

Changing teaching responsibility, shifting those other policies for childcare support just changing the expectation.

24:45 **Liz** That's the one that's free. Everything that you said costs the university money except for just saying, "Let's keep it the way it is, but let's just acknowledge that people were likely to be less productive?" Did anybody do that?

Dior No.

Ivan Not that I'm aware of.

Liz No.

Dior No. No, I just had my third year reviews and nobody did that. I'll tell you.

Liz Well, [bleep] them.

25:11 **Dior** [Laughing] in fact, I was told to do more with less, pretty much

Liz [Bleep] them. Like, I'm just really bent outta shape. It's easy for me to be bent outta shape about it; I'm on the other side. But I sit on the tenure and promotion committee here. And I think most of the people we looked at were so senior by the time the pandemic happened that everybody kind of rolled through. I think we're gonna really see the effects of this in another two or three years.

Dior Well, another example of how that negatively impacted me (which is not my institution, but was a funding situation) was I had a research publication grant from the American Association of University Women. It was solely to publish a body of work, and it was a one year grant and I had to publish by a certain time. Well, that time was during the pandemic and six months of the postdoc's work was not happening, right, because he couldn't come to work. And so I asked them for an extension. I said, "We cannot publish. We've lost six months. I need another six months. We can't publish in this time period," and they said, "You have to, otherwise you have to give the money back."

26:25 **Ivan** Sorry, can we step back? The American Association of University Women.

Dior University *Women*, uh-huh.

Ivan Which was established to support women in American universities.

Dior Correct.

Ivan And they went through the pandemic and didn't give people extensions -

Dior Correct.

Ivan On their grants.

Dior Correct.

Ivan Are you [bleep]ing kidding me?

Dior No. They said no. So we had to publish in *microPublication* because I had to publish in order to fulfill the terms of that funding. That also ultimately hurt me in the end. My department was very, very not pleased with that because they didn't feel that it was, you know, up to standards. I tried to explain there were terms associated with those funds and that was the only way that we could sort of make everybody happy, but in the end it was sort of dissatisfying for the amount of work.

27:32 **Ivan** The whole thing just floors me and I dunno where to start, but the idea that a one year tenure clock extension when the pandemic is two and a half years now and it's not like there are no disruptions still, that you would in any way think that

that's a solution is bananas to me. But I think the bigger problem is it's the culture, it's the culture, it's the culture. Free for the university, as Liz said, to change the expectations. It's free for your colleagues to change their expectations, right? Like your third year review is your departmental colleagues. They have a choice to make. They have a choice to make, and they are choosing not to.

28:18 **Liz** And it's not like a tenure denial is saving anybody any money either. If we're just gonna talk about costs, setting somebody up with a bunch of start-up and then making it impossible for them to jump over some arbitrary bar of number of publications and number of grant dollars, that's unreasonable. And then just say, "No, you're not good enough, that's a waste of money too.

Dior They always say the messages, "We wanna support you," right? "You're an investment to us?" This is what you hear often at these like P & T workshops and such. But the reality is there's a micro-climate around you and then it kind of goes and bubbles out from there. For the really higher up administrators to feel comfortable evaluating you, it's what's on your position responsibility statement, what you were hired to do, and how you're meeting those things. Then for the department, there's all these other nuances for evaluation and it's so less stressful if you can just make sure you are above all of those marks [laughs]. But yeah, I would've liked to hear, it would've been great, "Wow. Dior, your lab actually had a couple papers during the pandemic, and you've brought in over a million dollars in PI funding and you've continued to support undergrad research and you've been teaching your classes. Great."

29:53 **Liz** You deserve to hear that Dior. You're pretty amazing actually.

Ivan Well, the thing that they should have said after that is, "We'd like you to go up for a tenure early?"

30:03 **Dior** That would've been awesome, but that was not what I was told. I was told to publish four complete stories, because I guess journals only take incomplete stuff. I really don't know. But yeah, I need more papers. We need more publications from the group, two years to do that. And we all know that it's about a year to get a publication from start to finish if all goes well.

Ivan The whole concept of tenure is a little [bleep]ed up or a lot [bleep]ed up. The idea that we want people to reach this bar, after which we remove pressures. Why not just remove pressures and have people work?

Liz There are lots of ways to motivate people to do great science and be great teachers that don't involve threatening to have their job removed in five years if they don't.

Dior Yeah. And it's also real cagey. I think it doesn't really support creativity. It puts a barrier in terms of when you can be explorative, when you can be more collaborative, when you can have the ability to kind of step outside of that box of what you were hired *exactly* to do with research. I think those things are very challenging and sort of punishing in some ways, and yet we are already seeing science very much shift from this paradigm of single PI grants (especially from early career people) to more multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, very collaborative, high-functioning groups of people that have different ideas and strengths. Those things don't really fit very well either in terms of how many dollars are you bringing us for you yourself and your own little percentage of whatever that is. That's also a mindset that I think some mentors and some faculty and programs are able to be supportive of, and other people are still not really thinking that they can know who that person is if they're not some sort of lonely island for their grants and things like that.

32:26 **Ivan** Obviously it was not offered to Dior, but I had seen some institutions that actually said , "We want to hear how the pandemic has affected you," so implicitly, I think, to help adjust expectations.

Dior We did have these COVID-19 impact statements on our annual reviews. I didn't do mine this year. I just said "delete" because that whole dichotomy of what it is you thought they wanted you to write and what kind of feedback you were supposed to be giving was totally convoluted. So the first year I did it, I thought it was exactly as you had just said, "Please give us honest feedback of how this year has impacted you?" So in my annual report for 2020, I wrote how half the year was a wipe out. All of these things, right? The childcare, the teaching, all of that.

And then come to find out that actually what they were looking for was not your nitty gritty “what went wrong”, but actually they were looking for ways that you just flipped the switch and you were innovative, and you made a gin and tonic out of your limes.

33:48 **Liz** Just the adult version of making lemonade.

[Laughter]

Dior Yes. The COVID-19 statement was like, “Okay, what have you done that was really great, even though everything was really sh[bleep]ty. [Laughs] And I just thought it was comical . . . like, no, I can't. They wanted to toot their own horn about ways that they were like doing great through all of this bullsh[bleep]t. So then this past year, I just didn't do it because I felt like it was a wash. And still to this day, I think the university is not entirely transparent about what they are doing with these statements. Are they collating the data? Are they finding any trends? If they are, are they changing anything? No. So why write another statement if it doesn't actually have an impact on anybody's mindset or policies?

34:46 **Liz** The NIH Biosketch have for a while had a sort of section where you could explain big breaks in publishing, and there's always been this question, like, “Should I put, 'I had some babies in there' or not?” It's unclear how that would impact how people see your CV.

35:05 **Dior** The USDA on my annual reports for my NIFA grant, it's the same. “What are the challenges that you've experienced?” or “How have things changed?” I will say during the pandemic one of my really close friends and colleagues died unexpectedly, not due to COVID. That actually impacted me more heavily the second year of the pandemic. Those are things that you can put into your USDA grant: loss of a collaborator, loss of key resources, what's your plan for kind of mitigating that. That sort of structure I think is helpful. I didn't see that sort of structure in the COVID-19 impact statement on our annual reviews.

35:54 **Ivan** I think it's great that the granting institutions are asking us this, but going back to the culture part, it's not showing up when you submit a new grant, - which is really what matters. As much as it's important to put in your grant reports and keep the program officers happy and stuff, the next time you write a grant, they

don't see the reports. There's no COVID impact statement in your grant when you write it. A colleague of ours got feedback on an NSF grant that, "Well, they haven't been that productive in the last three years," while parenting small children teaching during a pandemic

36:37 **Dior** It's horrifying. I've sat on grant panels recently and it's still just status quo. They're judging productivity from the last two years. Maybe take that off the items because it seems completely inhumane, to be honest. But I think the publication process during/coincident with all of this has also become a lot more entrenched and very slow and complicated and high expectation that also preclude anybody from even who's doing their best getting stuff done in a real timely turnaround. But I haven't seen any of that change in colleagues as I've sat on panels. The expectation is still very much there of, "Well, what have they been doing the last two years?" And I'm like, "Surviving?"

37:34 **Ivan** I do feel like there is a slow change happening. I think *some* of this is getting through, but I don't think it matters. Maybe we've gone from 60% of the people having these unrealistic expectations to 40%, but that 40% is more than enough on a panel to sink a grant.

Dior Yeah, if those are your two or three reviewers

Ivan Or just one of your three reviewers, and it gets much harder. You have to fight them each time. I remember sitting in a panel where this was being discussed, "We should be better on on grant panels in reviewing this because you shouldn't penalize women who maybe took a two year break or had a slow period in their career cuz they might have been-"

38:22 **Liz** Propagating this species.

Ivan Yeah. I was like, "Yeah, that's really good." The problem is I was sitting as a grad student in this panel in 2003 and we are [bleep]ing 20 years later and it's still a problem.

Dior Well I mean the other weird thing about that is that it's also tied to bias because I think if you're constantly in this loop (this halo effect of what have they done and what have they been doing in order to say that they're worthy of doing what

they're doing now), there's other ways to evaluate that, right? If they have preliminary data in place, they have the training, they have the collaborators great.

39:01 **Ivan** Wait, wait, wait, wait. You're saying we should evaluate the proposed science?

[Laughter]

Liz So much easier just to count publications.

Dior So much. Oh yeah, it's easier. "They publish all the time in *Nature Comms*, so give it to 'em. Sure they can do it?" Or, "Wow, this, this person hasn't published in two years. What have they been doing?"

Ivan And, you know, have some fucking humanity.

Dior Yeah.

Ivan Did they have a kid? Did their parents die? Did their brother die? Did they have a health issue? Are they going through something? Are they having trouble with the fact that our country is undergoing this massive shift to fascism?

39:52 **Dior** I think there's the short term and there's the long term and I think, for me, the biggest sort of disconnect there is not being able to recognize that (especially for early career, even mid-career folks who are, are changing trajectories or who have gotten tenure; I mean the mentoring there also really is lacking once you become an associate professor) . . . so maybe they haven't published in the last couple years to what you think is *crème de la crème*. But you know, this isn't somebody who's been coming to these panels for twenty years asking for money and has never published anything, right? Those two things are very, very different and yet I feel like they're judging them the same essentially, which to me it's just sort of like there's a buy-in period. There's a burn-in period.

And also, too, I think it would just be great to call the last two years of wash and instead be like, "Alright, what *can* we do that we're not currently doing to help you get those grants in, to help you finish those papers, to help you come up with another four grand to publish the paper because now your startup is done?" You know what I mean? And that's a project that's not on a grant that's funded, cuz

that's the other thing is that you don't have like this sort of umbrella fund of . . . I don't wanna call it fun money but you don't have this creative account money that goes towards other projects that . . . anyway. Those kinds of things I think would be more helpful.

41:28 **Liz** I think one of the things that made me extra angry about all this is how much I got the message that we did need to extend grace to our students and to give our students understanding and to ask less of them and to understand that Zoom classes are exhausting and it's hard to learn. We had to adjust all of the ways in which we assess our students, but nobody adjusted the way in which we were being assessed in any way. The only thing I can think of is journals really stepped back from deadlines. There's a lot more "Oh yeah, take as long as you want." And I think even some journals were like, "We're gonna really try not to ask people to do additional experiments," right? If it's close, just say yes.

It was a very dramatic juxtaposition for me to be asked to give grace to students and then watch absolutely no empathy, humanity or grace being extended to my junior colleagues who were having an extremely rough time. Some of my colleagues moved to other states so that their parents could take care of their kids while they taught for Wash U, who were kind of an employer. Makes their job so hard that you have to move away in order to do it. And what if you don't have parents to take care of your kids?

Dior I didn't. I don't,

43:09 **Liz** Then you just don't get to keep your job? Are we gonna learn anything from all this or not?

Dior I don't think so. I hope other places are. I mean, I have heard some really fantastic examples of colleagues just being able to look in and say, "Wow, all of our junior faculty are really struggling. Let's just take all their classes so they don't have to teach the next quarter," or however many quarters they need off from teaching. Just being more flexible and realizing that sometimes what you do now can positively impact two years out, three years out, but it doesn't necessarily have to continue for that long.

But it seems that people are very, very slow to do something in the now that they think will just get stuck. There was a whole year of advising students who were really struggling and I would have to just emotionally shut myself off from what was going on in my world in order to tend to their needs because the university really harps on the fact that we're very student-centered and student facing, and that's a challenge. But I think that's a challenge probably for many people in different professions all the time where they have to put that aside and focus on other things.

44:26 **Ivan** Well, Dior, we really appreciate you giving us your time and your energy and the real view of how things are going. I frankly find it mostly maddening, but it's an important thing that we need to talk about, and we actually need to fix this culture. If people want to discuss this further with you or have any thoughts that they wanna share with you, how can they get in touch?

Dior Thanks so much for letting me share these ideas and experiences. I think it's really great to hear other people's stories, too, and so I'm always happy to chat with people. You can get in touch with me on Twitter @KelleyDior; last name first, first name second. By email, DKelley@IowaState.edu. Or through any of the other usual channels where people might connect.

45:29 **Ivan** And Liz, how can people get in touch with you?

Liz Twitter is also my preferred mode of communication. You can reach me there @EHaswell

Ivan You can reach me @BaxterTwi, and you can reach the podcast @TaprootPodcast. And with that, thanks again, Dior. It was a pleasure.

Dior Thank you.

45:50 **Liz** Thank you, Dior. Take care.