Western Faculty Profile: Dr. Ingrid Johnsrude

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No conflicts of interest declared

Background

Dr. Johnsrude completed her undergraduate degree in psychology at Queen's University. Her interest in psychology and the communication sciences began with an undergraduate project investigating whether the sounds used by songbirds to communicate were acoustically invariant. This grew into a thesis project at the same lab, and later, a master's and PhD in human neuropsychology at the Montreal Neurological Institute and McGill. She took up a position as a postdoctoral fellow at Cambridge.

Dr. Johnsrude's research spans several different areas of interest. Collectively reflective of her undergraduate, PhD and postdoctoral training, her work is a mixture of neuroimaging, auditory, and cognitive science. She is excited about the trajectory her career has taken. While animal behavior is a growing and fascinating field, working with epileptic patients at McGill allowed her to appreciate the rewarding elements of human interaction. Currently the Johnsrude lab is focused on using high resolution imaging methods to improve clinical assessments. Another branch of her work is focused on improving the characterization of hearing impairments in elderly populations.

Advice for undergraduates

"You are the product of the people that have trained you." To this end, "it is important to find mentors whom you respect, and to keep an open mind, while surrounding yourself with bright and capable individuals with whom you can share ideas, collaborate and work through problems."

Qualities of an excellent scientist

A combination of resourcefulness, imagination, and unrelenting perseverance are crucial to success in academia and research. Excellent communication skills are also essential—facilitating science for other individuals is a large component of academia. Furthermore, many of things faculty scientists have to do, such as keeping financial accounts, managing multiyear or multimillion dollar budgets, effective teaching and personnel management, were not taught in graduate school.

Overcoming challenges

According to Dr. Johnsrude, finding the right balance between fostering intellectual curiosity and the practical limitations of a finite number of waking hours in the day is a significant professional challenge.

Furthermore, there is a great deal of self-induced pressure in this line of work. In many ways, the job of an academic is like running one's own business. It is important to be strategic and methodical to obtain the optimal results. This is difficult, since the goalposts of success are always moving. Feedback (especially positive) is rare, and sometimes identifying how to move forward is a challenge itself. However, this should not discourage aspiring researchers. Dr. Johnsrude reminds us that career trajectories do not always have to be linear and predictable. If you work hard to find the intersection of your strengths and skills, success will come to you, even if it is in an unexpected form.

To Learn more on Dr. Johnsrude's lab and research, please visit his website at:

<http://www.rotman.uwo.ca/portfolio-items/ingrid-johnsrude/>