Episode 61: Jennifer Herman

# KL: Katie Linder JH: Jennifer Herman

# KL: You’re listening to “Research in Action”: episode sixty-one.

# [intro music]

# Segment 1:

# KL: Welcome to “Research in Action,” a weekly podcast where you can hear about topics and issues related to research in higher education from experts across a range of disciplines. I’m your host, Dr. Katie Linder, director of research at Oregon State University Ecampus. Along with every episode, we post show notes with links to resources mentioned in the episode, a full transcript, and an instructor guide for incorporating the episode into your courses. Check out the show’s website at ecampus.oregonstate.edu/podcast to find all of these resources.

On this episode, I’m joined by Dr. Jennifer Herman, the first permanent director of the Center of Excellence in Teaching at Simmons College. In this role, she develops and offers research-based professional development opportunities for faculty around teaching and scholarship and provides structured support for curriculum design at all curricular levels. She is currently a co-PI on three major grant-funded projects, regularly presents at both national and international conferences, and facilitates multiple high-impact signature programs, including course design institutes, a teaching institute for Harvard Medical School, and faculty writing retreats. She has also worked as a curriculum development consultant and faculty writing coach for over 10 years, including designing training programs and curricula for the U.S. Department of State and the New York State Small Business Development Center. She currently teaches education courses in the Health Professions Education doctoral program, and also has extensive teaching experience in writing, literature, and GMAT, GRE, and SAT test prep courses. Previously, Jennifer was the founding Director of the Center for the Advancement of Scholarship, Teaching, and Learning at Niagara University. She received her PhD in Higher Education from the University at Buffalo and her MA in International Training and Education from American University.

Thanks so much for joining me today, Jennifer.

**JH:** Thanks so much for having me!

**KL:** So Jennifer, you and I met when we were in Boston. You’re still in Boston, but I used to live in Boston and work there, and we were both directing centers for teaching and learning, and we were both attempting, and I think somewhat succeeding, at being researchers while we were administrators. And so I thought that it would be great to have you on the show to talk a little bit about how do you kind of find that balance as you’re working in a full time administrative role with also being an administrator. So let me ask first, as a full time administrator, how do you prioritize research as part of your role?

**JH:** You know, honestly Katie, because research is not explicitly part of my job description, or an expectation for my position, it often becomes a lower priority, but there’s still pressure there. Research and publications are needed, you know, if I’m going to apply for another position in the future, and as you know, it’s part of the currency of academia, but it’s always tough to balance that, because it’s not a part of what I currently get evaluated on. So I always have to find a way to squeeze it in. I found what’s been most effective overall is tying it into my primary responsibilities, and so I’m often developing programs and running programs, and trying things that are new and innovative for the benefit of our faculty here at Simmons. And I found that the best way to be active as a researcher is to gather data on some of the things that I’m doing as part of my full time work, and to write and publish on that. So I found that often my publishing is all applied, and so it fits very well with what I’m doing on a day to day basis.

**KL:** I love that idea. And that actually reminds me of our episode we had with Kevin Gannon, where he talks about balancing research and teaching, and one way of doing that is to publish on your teaching. So this sounds like kind of a spin on that, where you publish just on some of the things you’re involved with, and the administrative capacity and one of the things I think that maybe some of our listeners don’t know is that there are huge bodies of literature around certain administrative responsibilities. Like for example, directing a center for teaching and learning, there’s a whole literature around that and faculty development and what that means, that administrators can contribute to. So I think that’s really interesting. You know one of the things you mentioned is that this is not really part of your job description, and it was something that I actually eventually built into my job description, because I wanted to be held accountable for it, and that was one way I did that. I’m wondering if you could talk about if you think it’s important for administrators to engage in research, do you think it’s more important for certain roles than others, is it kind of person-specific depending on what one’s career goals are, what are your thoughts on that?

**JH:** So I think for most administrators, actually that they should not be engaging in research. But what I see as a gap is that a lot of those people aren’t reading and using research and they may be producing, but they’re not actually using it in practice. And I also see that there isn’t as much assessment or evaluation of their own work being done, and not much publication around that as well. I think there’s often an assumption in academia that everyone should be engaged in research, but that’s not necessarily wise for all roles. But with that being said, first keep in mind that publications are the currency of academia, and that some people are in a position like me that research is necessary to be current, and to keep yourself open for new opportunities. But another type of administrative role that I think is really important for people to engage in research, is people who are coming from the faculty, and might be doing temporary faculty assignment. I know lots of folks who are at that post-tenure professor level that are seeking out a new leadership opportunity. So they might be looking at the department chair, they might be temporarily stepping in as full time administrator in a role such as directing a new undergraduate program, directing a new, whatever the strategic initiative is for the school. And one of the things I often hear from faculty here at Simmons is there is a tension there. That they still have an expectation for scholarship, they still need to do scholarship for promotion, but their work has shifted, so their day to day work isn’t focused on research, and so I think its important that those folks are still continuing to be strongly engaged and to find balance in that way. And it’s surprising how many people are in that position actually!

**KL:** Yeah, and well I think that leads into my next question, which is how does being an administrator affect how or when you write? Because I think that faculty who do shift into those roles will see an uptick in the number of meetings, or memos, or emails that they have to write, or they just see kind of a shift in what you were saying, in their workload or what is prioritized. So I’m wondering if you could talk a little bit about how are you impacted by that, has it shifted and changed over time in terms of how and when you find time to write?

**JH:** I’ve found that, when I first started in academia, a lot of my writing was done over the summer months. That’s when I had the most flexibility and I think that’s what a lot of us assume, is that we’ll get our writing done over the summer. But I found that being in a administrative role, that it’s not necessarily slower in the summer. That it tends to, workload tends to ease up at unexpected times. So me personally, it’s during finals, because everyone is so engaged and absorbed in final exams, that I usually have a couple of days that are unexpectedly free that I can get writing done during that time. So I find it surprising and unpredictable when I’m able to find time to write. I also found that when I increase the number of collaborative writing projects I’ve been doing that my writing time is much more closely tied to other people’s schedules. So I have both collaborative projects where I’m working with faculty and projects where I’m working with administrators. So I’ve found in the faculty projects, we don’t do much writing in the summer, just because they’re usually not here or they’re on vacation, then it’s after the semester is underway that they become more involved. Administrators, I’ve found is the opposite, that it’s usually when the faculty are away that they want to get buckled down and get started on these things. So yeah I’ve found increasingly when I write and how I write is dictated by other people.

**KL:** That is so fascinating. I mean I think that I also saw an increase in my collaborative writing when I became a full time administrator, and it was actually just the efficiency and being able to pass it back and forth and see it progress, not always with just me pushing it forward, and that was always really motivating for me.

**JH:** Oh absolutely.

**KL:** Yeah, it feels kind of like magic sometimes, when your collaborator sends something back and there’s like extra paragraphs added in and that’s a huge win.

**JH:** Mhm.

**KL:** Well we’re going to take a brief break, when we come back we’ll hear more from Jennifer about one of the areas that she does for her work, and that is writing retreats! So, back in a moment.

[*music plays*]

# Segment 2:

**KL:** So Jennifer, one of the things that I know you do with Simmons, in your role with the Center of Excellence in Teaching is you facilitate writing retreats with your faculty. And I love writing retreats, I have used them in the past and I think they’re phenomenal, and so let’s start out, can you tell us a little bit about these writing retreats that you’re facilitating at Simmons?

**JH:** Oh absolutely. So we’ve done four of them so far, and they’re one of our most popular programs, I mean who doesn’t like a writing retreat?

**KL:** I was about to say, that does not surprise me at all.

**JH:** So yeah, there’s always a waitlist, there’s always tremendous interest in this program. So basically how it works for us is it’s a three day two night retreat that’s held offsite, so we rent a retreat house in Duxbury, Massachusetts. And it’s lovely because it’s close to a town, but it’s far enough way that you feel secluded even if you’re not. They have a huge ground, they have a private beach, and we cook all our own meals, and people spend the night there, and it feels a little bit like summer camp for faculty, somebody described it that way once. Ah, it’s tremendous fun, but it’s also really, really productive. I get to hear from people all year long that say to me, “oh, I got my paper published that I worked on at retreat, oh I got that grant I was working on”. So it’s a wonderful program, and we’re so happy that we’ve been able to run it four times already.

**KL:** That’s amazing. So let’s talk a little bit about, for people who may not know, or people who might associate it more maybe with fiction writers or not necessarily with academia, what is sort of the purpose and goal with a writing retreat?

**JH:** Well the broadest goal really is productivity. And so the purpose is to give people a dedicated time and place to get scholarship done. So it’s usually done at a point where faculty are starting to think about scholarship, so we do ours right after graduation, as sort of a launch into summer writing. And so that’s one of the big pieces, increasing scholarship, supporting productivity, supporting the writing process, but there are other goals as well. One is to help break down disciplinary silos. So it’s a cross disciplinary retreat, people get to know each other really well. And some of those friendships and connections have benefits that go on for years, people finally know each other across the community. Another goal is to help build some strong relationships with the staff that’s running the retreat. It’s run by the Center for Excellence in Teaching, and we want people to know us, so that they’re coming to more programs and seeing more services. It’s one of the other I guess, hidden goals of the retreat, and another is on the writing process. So some people are coming on the retreat because they know that some of the leaders have a lot of background in how to be a more efficient writer, how to be more productive, how to make better use of your time, how to get past writer’s block, and that’s a reason why a lot of people come on it. Not because of the explicit programming but because of the informal conversations and support they get around that. But the overall goal is just to really get stuff done.

**KL:** Yeah, well I love this, one of the things I really like about writing retreats and maybe we can talk a little but more this, is that they’re usually goal oriented, and that you come into this retreat with a specific goal or vision of what you’re trying to do. Is that, let’s talk about some of the components of a writing retreat, and kind of what’s helpful to include. And so is that one of them? To make sure you have that goal oriented focus?

**JH:** For the participants, I think it’s important to be concrete on what your goals are. To have specific projects, and specific goals you’re bringing in that you’d like to accomplish. For people who are putting it on it’s all about flexibility and community. I figured out pretty early on that this is not a time that you schedule anything. Good writing retreats don’t have a set schedule, that you have to go to a peer writing session at this point or anything like that. We just have a welcoming session and then we have group dinners, that there’s an ending point to the day that people can come together and just stop working for a little bit. Location is really important if you’re conducting a writing retreat. I found that it’s important to get the people out of their usual space, so having it on campus doesn’t really work very well. There are a lot of distractions, and so it’s helpful to hold it in areas so that people are focused on that. It’s probably also not a good idea to have it at hotel in the middle of big city or something like that where there a lot of other things to do.

**KL:** Yeah, that’s a great point.

**JH:** Another piece is I think it’s important to include components of relaxation and down time. Some of our retreats in the past, you know we’ve went down to the beach, there’s a meditation garden, we make fire, make s’mores, and we do some of those things. People take naps, and I have to remind them that this is not goofing off, that you have to give your brain rest, and if you do those things, yeah. You’re more productive overall. And so having a location that affords opportunities for those things is really important.

**KL:** I love that point. I think that, I mean part of being—especially when you are getting into a kind of season of very active writing, and this is something I’m actually in right now. I’ve got some grant projects going on and articles, and research outputs, and things like that. I’ve actually found it’s more important to get extra sleep, to be up and taking walks, moving around so you’re not sitting at your desk all the time, giving your brain rest when it needs rest. Because otherwise you can get kind of overwhelmed, and your brain cannot function as well as you would like when you’re trying to get all of these outputs going. Yeah, I mean that’s such a key thing.

**JH:** Yeah, we only have so much mental capacity, and when we’re at our best is when we’re fresh and when we’re sharp. And if you’ve been going for a few hours, you just can’t try to push yourself through, because then your productivity goes down, the quality goes down. You have to build those opportunities for relaxation for yourself. So so many people go for runs, it’s amazing. [laughs]

**KL:** Yeah, I can imagine. That’s such a great, that’s such an excellent point. So in the past, and this kind of goes back to what we said in segment one, being a full time administrator and researcher, sometimes I would take vacation and I would take myself on a writing retreat. And I want to talk a little bit about what some of the benefits are of having a writing retreat with other people versus just having like a self-imposed writing retreat, where you’re just kind of hunkering down and getting some stuff done. Have you seen—I know you kind of already mentioned this idea of community, but what are some of the things that come out of being in that productive space with other people?

**JH:** Oh, it’s so much more effective with others. I think that one of the big pieces when you’re surrounding by other people who are there for the same purpose. So there’s this invisible peer pressure to be productive. So no one actually says anything, but they’re feeling guilty if they’re not being productive.

**KL:** I love that. [laughs]

**JH:** So you know, there’s that piece. That’s very valid. Another piece that’s really helpful is people to bounce ideas off of. That sometimes you just come to that point where you need to talk it through with somebody, and when you’re doing a retreat where you set time aside for yourself for the day I your office to get writing done. Those opportunities aren’t naturally there, and at a writing retreat, you can imagine how much talking goes on at a writing retreat, because people are trying to work through ideas and work through some of these problems. So we actually have a quiet room and a talking room so that if you want to have silence and you want to be able to just get the writing done there’s a room you can go to. But if you need to talk, there’s a different room you can go to as well. It’s such a valuable and integral part of what makes a writing retreat effective. And also it’s a whole experience, because it’s not just about productivity. It’s about making connections and building up relationships that are going to help you in other parts of your job. And so there’s something to be said for having the group pasta dinner, and for doing the bonfire at the end of the day, and gossiping about whatever gossip there is at the institution in the wee hours. You know, sharing a bunk with somebody, there’s a lot of good things that come out of that that aren’t really connected to the writing itself.

**KL:** So on these retreats, how many folks are usually there?

**JH:** So ours we cap at ten, and we usually have two or three staff members on site. The staff members basically do cooking, so we cook all these group meals. We have things like printers and writing books, things like that. And there’s also—at least two of the staff members are there to give feedback on drafts.

**KL:** Okay.

**JH:** So if you just need to sit down and talk through a draft with somebody, there’s someone who can do that with you. And I found about ten people for participants is about right. Smaller or bigger.... Bigger, logistically, it’s tough to find a good retreat house that still has that sense of community, but, you know, there’s only so many people who can use a bathroom [laughs], to share a bathroom, you know.

**KL:** Sure, sure.

**JH:** And fewer, you don’t have the same sense of community.

**KL:** Well, you’ve convinced me, Jennifer. I’m ready to go on a writing retreat right now. That sounds awesome.

We’re going to take another brief break. When we come back, we’ll hear a little bit from Jennifer about her experience as a writing coach. Back in a moment.

[music]

# Segment 3:

**KL:** Jennifer, one of the things that you have worked on in the past and you do in part with your role with the Center for Excellence in Teaching in Simmons is that you are a writing coach, and I wanted to talk a little bit about this with you, because I think that some people are kind of intrigued by this idea of a writing coach. They may not know what it is, what a writing coach can help you do. And I want to start just with a disclaimer that Jennifer is actually not accepting clients, so this is not promotional for her work, it’s really just to pick her brain about what is it that writing coaches can help with? So, first, let’s talk a little bit about just what does a writing coach entail? Like, what are some of the things that they might help you to do?

**JH:** Well, first, thank you for the disclaimer, Katie. [laughs] When people find out what a writing coach does, they’re usually very excited and want to work with one, and so it makes my time quite limited. [laughs]

**KL:** [inaudible]

**JH:** Yeah. So, a writing coach is really like having an English professor in your back pocket.

**KL:** Ooh.

**JH:** Yeah! [laughs]

**KL:** I’m already intrigued. [laughs]

**JH:** Yeah. Yeah. If you think about any class you might have taken, like a composition course, or even working with a really good committee member when you were working on a dissertation, where you get really good feedback on drafts. That’s what a writing coach does, for the most part, is they help with the high-level pieces. So they can give you guidance around things like is your message clear, do you have enough evidence, are there areas where you could use more, how’s your organization, sentence-level clarity, how are things going, are there patterns of error with grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Some of them help with things like APA format or, you know, whatever the documentation style is, to help you put the manuscript format together. But really it’s giving you that really carefully feedback on a draft that you would get from a writing professor.

**KL:** So it sounds kind of like a mentorship relationship, where you have someone who’s maybe a little bit more experienced with writing or publication who is giving you feedback on kind of those broader issues, like you said, and so this person may not be a disciplinary expert within your own discipline. Is that correct?

**JH:** That’s correct, and often you’ll have people that specialize in an error. So, my specialization is the social sciences, and specifically education. That’s where most of my clients have been. But it doesn’t mean that you actually need a coach who has background in your content, and it actually better to not. It’s much easier for the coach to be able to help you with the quality of your writing if they aren’t familiar with the details and nuances of where you are.

**KL:** I actually think that’s such an important point. I want to pause there for just a second, because I think this is an area where, when I’ve worked with faculty in the past for things like writing groups, they think they need people from their discipline in their writing group, and so when we—at my previous position we used to host writing groups, and I would always mix up people by discipline, and there was always this initial skepticism about that, but then people really did find they needed someone outside of their discipline to be able to ask questions about things like jargon, and if they had someone within their discipline who would make assumptions about things, it didn’t help the clarity of the piece. And so I think that’s such an excellent point, that you should be really open to having someone who maybe isn’t a content expert in your area, because they can bring up questions and issues that maybe someone who was a content aspect wouldn’t necessarily see.

**JH:** Oh, it’s much more helpful, and a really good writing coach can help you with the process, too. So it’s not just the content of your writing, it’s how you’re approaching writing generally. If you’re doing something like putting a book proposal or writing a book or writing a dissertation, they can give you advice about how to work the publisher, how to work with your dissertation committee, if something seems ready to go, if your timeline is realistic. So all of those components are an important part of the process of working with a writing coach. It’s not just someone to look at drafts, so, it’s must more comprehensive than that.

**KL:** Wow. So, okay. So if someone is thinking they need to have a writing coach, you know, they’re listening to this going, “Okay, I didn’t know I needed that, —

**JH:** [laughs]

**KL:** —but now I know.” And maybe they’re thinking that about having a writing retreat, too. They’re realizing, you know, “This is really what I need.” But how does one go about finding a writing coach, and maybe more specifically, making sure that writing coach is legit?

**JH:** Mm. Those are both very good questions. The first question, about how do you find one, it’s very tough. There aren’t a whole lot of writing coaches out there that have a lot of experience, and I know that there are a few companies that if you google you can find some that do writing coaching and have a whole network of writing coaches. But I think, really, one of the best ways is through word of mouth. If you have a colleague who’s worked with someone who’s really good, that’s probably one of the best ways. But it’s really tough to find somebody. I think one of the reasons is that there are a lot of different skills that you need. You need to be able to understand the language of academia and the process of how these things work. You also have to be a writing expert, and it’s tough to find those two in one person who wants to go down this path.

**KL:** That’s a really interesting mix of skillsets.

**JH:** It is.

**KL:** Yeah.

**JH:** It is. And it’s a very time-intensive process. You get to know your writing coach really well, and so writing coaches tend to just take on a few clients. Like, I don’t think I’ve had more than three at a time, just because you’re working with someone on a long-term basis and you need to be able to know their research through and through, and so it’s difficult to have too many people, because you can’t keep all those projects in your head concurrently [inaudible].

**KL:** Sure, sure. Well, in your own work, too, if as a writing coach you’re also a researcher or doing your own writing.

**JH:** Oh, exactly.

**KL:** Well, and I think you’ve pointed out, you’ve kind of implied, that when you have a writing coach, it’s really building a relationship with that person, and you spend quite a bit of time together working through your projects, and also writing is such a personal thing, I would imagine you share all kinds of things with your writing coach that maybe go beyond just the content of the paper—

**JH:** Mm-hm.

**KL:** —or grammar questions. It may be that you’re really struggling with certain components of the writing process.

**JH:** And typically people who really could benefit the most from a writing coach are people that have some of these larger concerns that they want to work through. Copyeditors are plentiful, you know, you can find copyeditors or people to help you format your manuscript, you can find those all over the place. I’ve found some of the people who—some of the common elements of people who have needed support from a writing coach that I’ve worked with. One is people who have trouble with the expert blind spot, that they are so far into their research it’s hard for them to write to an audience that doesn’t know all that they know about the content, and so that’s a common issue. Another is organization, particularly with people for whom English is not their first language, that sometimes they were taught a style of writing that isn’t what the book publisher is looking for, that they need to move to something that’s more linear and may feel a bit foreign.

And so I’ve found—I’ve worked with a lot of people in that area, and also, you know, one of the more common things I get is “Help, my dissertation or my book proposal or book manuscript is three times the length of what the publisher or my committee will accept. How do I narrow this?” I’ve gotten quite a few people who are in that space, that they’re very excited about their content, they’ve just written too much, and it’s very hard for them to be able to take the red pen to their own writing and to really see what is important and what can be put to the side.

**KL:** Yeah, I mean, I think you’ve pointed out—I love the idea of a blind spot, that as writers we have these blind spots, and you see it come out in things like grant writing, too, because you’re maybe talking to an audience that’s outside of your content area and they need things explained in layperson’s terms, and it can be really challenging to do that. And I love this idea of having someone outside of yourself that can really look at your writing, and in a more objective fashion, and help you to make those decisions. That just seems like it would be incredibly fruitful and helpful.

**JH:** Yeah. I think the expert blind spot, I agree, it’s a big piece. We develop quite a bit of ownership over our writing when we create something, and it’s very difficult to either let it go or to accept that other people don’t understand it the same way we do. And sometimes we skip over pieces that are really important to explain something to an audience, just because we know them so well. And so that’s where it’s so helpful to have somebody that doesn’t know your content very well to say, “Wait, how did you get from there to there?” [*laughs*]

**KL:** Yeah, those little logic leaps that we make in our writing.

**JH:** Oh yeah.

**KL:** Yeah, I know we’ve all been there. Well, Jennifer, I want to thank you so much for coming on the show, sharing your wisdom, your experience, your knowledge. This has just been so helpful to learn about how you’re balancing researching as an administrator, and also the pieces that you’ve shared with us about writing retreats and writing coaching, so thanks so much.

**JH:** Thank you, Katie.

**KL:** And thanks to our listeners for joining us for this week’s episode of “Research in Action”. I’m Katie Linder, and we’ll be back next week with a new episode.

[outro music]

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# Bonus Clip #1:

**KL:** In this first bonus clip for Episode 61 of the “Research in Action*”* podcast, Dr. Jennifer Herman discusses prioritizing research projects—take a listen.

But I’m wondering if you could talk a little bit about—and maybe this is related to that—how do you decide what to prioritize in terms of your research? Is it tied in with those collaborators or are there others kinds of factors that are involved in that?

**JH:** Um, there’s several factors. Because my research is so tied to my practice, I’m often thinking about the long-term benefit to my institution and the field and me personally, and trying to find projects that fit all three of those, and help to benefit all three of those areas. So, over the last couple of years I’ve become very involved in grant-funded projects, and I’m currently a co-PI on three different grants. And so I’ve found that my priorities are often in the different components of where those grants are. Some of these areas we’re already writing, some areas we’re planning on publishing the results. And a lot of those grants are supporting initiatives that are important to my institution. So it’s very interconnected with both institutional priorities and needs in the field, so often it’s not my personal preference, and I think that’s one of the pieces that comes with being an administrator that’s doing applied research rather than just original research in the discipline, is that my priorities are sometimes dictated by things outside of myself. So, another piece that drives what I prioritize is I do some writing that is not tied to what’s happening at my institution but rather our passion projects, or things that are messages that I’ve just been wanting to get out for a long time. And sometimes it’s finding the right collaborator, and when I found that right person who’s a good fit for my working style and has the same interest, then that project usually takes shape, because that connection is finally made. And so that helps prioritize things as well.

**KL:** I love that. That’s such an interesting way to think about how things get prioritized.

You’ve just heard a bonus clip from Episode 61 of the “Research in Action” podcast, with Dr. Jennifer Herman discussing prioritizing research projects. Thanks for listening!

[music]

# Bonus Clip #2:

**KL:** In this second bonus clip for Episode 61 of the “Research in Action” podcast, Dr. Jennifer Herman shares about juggling multiple writing pipelines– take a listen.

So you mentioned these passion projects, and I’m wondering if you can talk a little bit about.... I think a lot of administrators juggle more than one pipeline. We may have—

**JH:** Oh yes. [*laughs*]

**KL:** [inaudible] —yeah, exactly as you were saying, things that are kind of a assigned to us or that are not necessarily in our control that we need to write about or grant-write for or things like that. But then also there may be a pipeline of research that’s really related to your own interests. It could be related to your original discipline, if you’re working in an administrative role that’s kind of outside of your original discipline. And that, I think, presents its own challenges, to juggle kind of both of those pipelines at once. Can you speak to that a little bit?

**JH:** Oh, sure. So I think it’s a little bit easier for me personally, because my discipline is higher education, and so there isn’t as much of a divide between publishing in my discipline and publishing applied pieces, as I’ve been doing, because they’re really very connected. And I was already a Center director when I started pursuing my PhD, and so my practice at the time informed the development of my research interests, so that helped quite a bit. But I know that I’m more the exception than the rule, and I’ve had lots of conversations with other administrators that often feel the tension between doing research in their discipline and doing research in the field, and in particular I noticed this with the sciences, that it’s very hard to bridge that gap, and that they often have different projects going on concurrently. It’s a challenge. It’s a challenge, and sometimes it’s just picking one or the other to focus your energies on. So, for me, I feel grateful that my discipline and my administrative research are very closely aligned, so there’s not much differentiation there for me.

**KL:** Well, and I think that, you know, kind of similarly to what we talked about at the very beginning, if you can find ways to dovetail both of them—and I remember very early on, when I was working in a center for teaching and learning, I was trying to do this with my original discipline of women and gender studies and was having some challenges of trying to kind of think about the overlap. And one of the pieces I ended up publishing was an intro to gender studies syllabus, and I published it in the syllabus journal. And so I was able to kind of reflect on my teaching in a women’s studies, gender studies environment but using the lens of kind of my center for teaching and learning hat. And I think that that, you know, that’s definitely one way to think about, is can you bring these two things that may feel very disparate together, and to kind of help yourself. But the other piece, too, is I know some people decide, they get to a certain point and decide to kind of shut down one of the pipelines and focus on, you know, one primarily, just because—for efficiency’s sake, but also, you know, just one part of their career is closed out, and it’s time to kind of move on to the next piece.

**JH:** Oh, absolutely. I think it depends on your long-term career trajectory. If you’re in an administrative position temporarily and you’re planning to return to the faculty, that’s very different from being a full-time administrator for the long term.

**KL:** You’ve just heard a bonus clip from Episode 61 of the *Research in Action* podcast, with Dr. Jennifer Herman sharing about juggling multiple writing pipelines. Thanks for listening!

[*music*]