
The Tenure Challenge

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The Process

Strategies for Success

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Teaching

=Scholarship=

Research

Service

Tenure

“a status granted after a trial period to a teacher protecting him from summary dismissal” Webster's

- Tenure is a long term commitment by the institution and is not taken lightly
 - » A “club” with lifetime membership
- ~70% of CS/CE “regular ranks” faculty at PhD granting institutions were tenured in 2002-03 (as reported by CRA)
 - » ~60% of women, ~72% of men
 - » (<10% of tenured CS/CE faculty are women)

The Academic "Ladder"

Postdoc

Assistant Professor

Associate Professor

Professor

tenure

Chaired Professor

Department Head

Associate Dean

Dean

...

Tenure Process

Usually a six year "clock"

- Find out the evaluation process
 - » Yearly **oral** evaluations by Dept. Head
 - » Regular **written** evaluations by Dept. P&T Committee, Dept. Head, Dean and Campus/School M&P Committee
 - » Sixth year promotion and tenure review with letters from **external** evaluators

Primary Criteria: what matters?

- Evidence of scholarly distinction, accomplishment and impact in your field
 - » coherent body of important work
 - » significant theme showing growth as a scholar
 - » sufficient productivity to show promise for sustained productivity
 - » respect by acknowledged experts
- Different fields and different universities have different cultures
 - » how do publication patterns affect expectations?
 - » how is collaboration assessed?
 - » how is impact measured?

Tenure "Rules"

- Find out local expectations: the rules and culture at your institution (read the published tenure guidelines)
- Figure out which body is the filter
- Beware: expectations may change and you will get different advice from different people
 - » Best advice comes from recently tenured faculty in an area close to yours and senior faculty who serve on tenure/promotion committee(s)

No substitute for Quality

- Basic factors

- » excellence in research
- » excellence in teaching
- » excellence in service

} *importance
depends on
institution*

- How can you do it all?

- » Concentrate on what's important in your local context
- » Whatever that is, don't be a bad teacher
- » Perform limited, but reliable service

... *perceptions count*

Local Expectations

- Research

- » How many and what kind of papers are expected?
- » How much grant support is expected?
- » How is support from industry viewed?
- » How is [interdisciplinary] collaboration viewed?
- » Is your research area viewed favorably?

- Teaching

- » What do faculty expect of students?
- » What do students expect from faculty?
- » What do colleagues expect from your course?

- Service

- » How much service is really required?
- » How much can be gained from service by getting to know others on campus?

Research

- Articulate your research goals/plan - write it down and update it yearly
 - » get started right away and don't slow down toward the end
- Establish research independence
 - » from your PhD advisor quickly and also from colleagues
 - » *if* coauthors do **not** count as external evaluators, be careful with wide-ranging collaboration
- Keep your field narrow enough to focus but not so narrow as to be inconsequential
- Produce evidence of impact

Publications

- **Quality** before quantity in publications
- Journal publications
 - » Understand the importance of publishing in referred journals
 - » Understand journal rankings in your field and related fields that you publish in
 - » Track special issues for faster turnaround
- Conferences and workshops
 - » Be visible and well-respected
 - » Understand conference/workshop rankings
 - » Keep track of acceptance rates
- Read reviews, revise and resubmit rejected papers worth salvaging

Research Advising

- Recruit good graduate students
 - » Balance PhD and MS students
 - Try to graduate at least one PhD by year six
 - Don't take on too many MS students
 - » Offer grad level reading course as overload (if necessary)
 - » Use start-up RA and equipment monies wisely
 - » Serve on grad admissions/recruiting committee
 - » Learn when and how to say "no"
 - A bad student is worse than no students
 - See them "in action" first (in class, trial project)

Funding

- Target funding opportunities
 - » Visit funding agency sites regularly
 - Get on a funding opportunities mail list
 - » NSF/ONR/ARL CAREER competitions
 - borrow sample proposals from successful colleagues
 - » Other career development award possibilities (industry, university)
- Ask successful colleagues to review your proposal outline, read your proposal and *listen* to their feedback
- Schedule visit to a prime funding agency
- Volunteer to be on NSF review panels
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again

Teaching

- Articulate your teaching goals/plan - write it down and update it yearly
- Learn when/how/why to say *no*
- Negotiate for release from teaching
 - » As part of start-up package, for developing new courses and labs, pre-tenure mini-sabbaticals
- Shoot for **good perceptions** - positive evaluations
 - » Be available, but careful of your time
 - be on time and don't end early
 - give extra lectures when it helps
 - keep regular office hours
 - » Don't be too hard **or** too easy
 - good learning is not *hard* teaching
 - » Don't do evaluations right after an exam

Teaching Portfolio

- Teach a blend of courses (small/large, undergrad/grad)
- Don't do **too much** curriculum development
 - » Teach as few different courses as possible
 - Invest your time in developing a good set of notes and use them over and over again
 - » Teach courses that are in your area or easy for you
 - graduate courses may promote your research
 - stay away from weeder and large time commitment courses
- Find help
 - » Take advantage of campus support programs
 - » Ask colleagues for help - share notes
 - » Use texts that provide support material (e.g., slides)
- Set up your "kudos" file and keep it up-to-date

Service

- Find out what/how much service really counts
 - » to the department, to the school/college, to the University, to the profession, to you
- Learn when/how/why to say no
- **Quality** and **reliability** are more important than quantity
- Do what's visible and will bring respect
 - » from your research community
 - » from your campus and department "elders"

Service Portfolio

- Do beneficial service
 - » graduate recruiting/admissions committee, student activities, colloquia chair (in 4th, 5th year)
 - » link your service to your research
 - » do things you enjoy
- Become active in professional society and conference activities
 - » volunteer for the job no one wants, do a good job, and get “promoted” to a better job
 - » pick one (or a few) conferences, stick to it
- Be careful
 - » turn down unreasonable requests
 - » turn down some assignments

Fundamental basis for academic success is **IMPACT**

- Much of computer science is experimental
- Impact can be evaluated in many ways
 - » journal publication
 - » conference publication
 - » curriculum development
 - » artifact creation
 - » technology transition
 - » effect on standards
 - » citations
 - » even hits on the web

*document
importance*

*... your colleagues and the P&T committee
must be convinced of impact*

Preparing the Dossier

Janie Irwin

Dossier Preparation

- Teaching
 - » Teaching evaluations (students and peers)
 - » Student research supervision
- Research and Scholarship
 - » Refereed publications (journals, conf. proceedings)
 - » External funding
- Service
 - » Service to your University, College, Dept.
 - » Service to your profession

Data Collection

- Review of PSU “rainbow” promotion and tenure dossier file dividers

Have On Hand

- Your long CV (with *everything*)
- Your short CV (two page NSF style)
- Your one paragraph bio
- Your one page description of research interests and accomplishments
- Your one page description of teaching interests and accomplishments
- Your wish list of . . . equipment, needs

P&T Survival Skills

- Always be writing (a paper, a proposal) because once you stop its hard to restart
- Establish your P&T data file right away (practice good data collection)
- Keep your web site up-to-date and complete, especially when requests for letters go out
- Take oral and written evaluations seriously; your department does!
 - » List actions to take to address areas of weakness; get feedback on them
- Find a *good* mentor in your dept. or college (good is not just nice)

Getting Good Letters

& Advice from Recent Experience

Sandhya Dwarkadas

Getting Yourself (and Your Research) Known

- Write good papers (and try to get them into) prestigious conferences in your field
- Network at conferences
- Correspond with paper authors (both at conferences and via e-mail) to get your questions answered
- Offer your services (e.g., publicity chair for a conference)
 - » But be careful not to over-extend yourself
- Try to get onto program committees

External Evaluators

- You will be asked for a list of potential letter writers
- Make a list of candidates
 - » knowledgeable in your research area(s)
 - » from the senior ranks
 - » from schools ranked equal or above yours
- As colloquium chair, invite candidates to give colloquia at your campus
- Invite yourself to give colloquia elsewhere
- Network at conferences

Be Courteous

- Be mindful of the help you receive
 - » From your letter writers (it's a lot of work!)
 - » From your colleagues
 - » From your staff
- Make sure to thank them for their efforts (e.g., thank your letter writers and intimate them of the tenure decision)

Who's Important

- Your Dept. Head
 - » work hard to establish and maintain good communication channels
- Senior faculty in your department
- Research colleagues
 - » faculty and students at your institution
 - » academic and industry colleagues elsewhere
- Your family and yourself

Advice from A Recent Promotion

- The most important thing is to enjoy the work you do
 - » Keeping in mind the milestones you need to reach to be successful at what you do
- Strike a balance between your family and social life and your career
 - » Don't be consumed by the process
- Above all, remember that there is life out there with OR without tenure

Dos and Don'ts

- Do become someone other faculty want as a colleague
- Do make a good first impression
- Do be a team player
- Do get to know leaders in your field
- Do take complaints seriously
- Do find mentors
- Do get along well with staff
- Do keep records
- Do choose your battles wisely
- Don't make enemies
- Don't let your research get off to a slow start
- Don't be labeled as a bad teacher
- Don't be viewed as unsupportive of department goals
- Don't do anything weird, irregular or unethical
- Don't brown-nose
- Don't make waves