
The Tenure Challenge¹

Lori Clarke
University of Massachusetts, Amherst

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¹(borrowed heavily from past mentoring slides)

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” faculty at PhD granting institutions are tenured (as reported by CRA)

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 -- common example...
 - » Yearly **written** evaluations by Dept. Personnel Committee and Dept. Head
 - » Mid-tenure review by Dept. Personnel Committee, Dept. Head, Dean and School Personnel Committee
 - ~6 external letters
 - » Sixth year promotion and tenure review
 - ~15 external letters

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 interdisciplinary work assessed and view?
 - » 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 academic body is the “real” filter
- Beware: expectations may change and you might 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?
- » Is the emphasis on professional or departmental service?

Research

- Articulate your research goals/plan - write it down and update it yearly
 - » get started right away and don't slow down
- Establish (some) 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 (that fit your goals)
 - » 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 courses
(as overload if necessary)
 - » Use start-up RA and equipment monies wisely
 - But do use it if you need it!
 - » 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 and then read your proposal
 - » *Listen* to their feedback
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again

Fundamental basis for academic success is IMPACT

- Much of computer science is experimental
- Impact can be evaluated in many ways
 - » journal publication
 - » conference publication
 - » 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*

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
 - » colloquia chair (in 4th, 5th year)
 - » link your service to your research
 - » do things you enjoy
- Become active in professional societies and conference activities
 - » Become known for being a good reviewer
 - quality reviews, done on time
 - speak-up at program committee meetings, defend your position but don't be obstinate
 - » First get involved with workshops, move up to major conferences
- Be careful with your time
 - » Be selective

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 be 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
 - » Teach courses that are in your area
 - 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
- Request a peer evaluation (don't depend solely on student evaluations)

Dossier Preparation

- Long CV
- Research statement- 3-5 pages long
- Teaching statement - 1-2 pages long
- Up-to-date web page
- Teaching Evaluations
- Letters of Recommendations
- Assessment of your case
 - » Department personnel committee
 - » Department chair
 - » College and Dean

Dossier Preparation

- Long CV
 - » List everything only once and carefully
 - » Education, Employment history
 - » Publications (books, book chapters, journals, conferences (with acceptance rates), workshops)
 - » Awards, Recognitions
 - » External Funding
 - » Service to Profession
 - » Service to Department (College, University)
 - » Seminars given, Classes taught
 - » Students supervised/graduated (awards, committees)

Research Statement

- Your chance to tell your story
 - » Explain what is hard, interesting, and exciting about your work
 - » Highlight your best work
 - » Show how your past results have impacted your current research direction
 - Show relationships among your different research thrusts
 - » Show that you have a coherent, long-term research plan
- Have several savvy faculty members read your statement and listen to their advice

External Evaluators

- External letter writers
 - » Some selected by you
 - » Some selected by your department
 - » Can usually black list one or two people--but do so carefully
 - » Can informally suggest names
 - » Some departments exclude/include:
 - Thesis advisor
 - Co-authors and collaborators

External Evaluators

- Your selected letter writers
 - » Number of people you suggest depends on department
 - Don't provide more names than requested, since your names are marked as such
 - » Department will ask only **some** of the evaluators from your list
 - » OK to ask someone if you can recommend them as a letter writer
 - Watch their body language--few people say "no" outright

External Letter Writers

- Make a list of candidates
 - » knowledgeable in your research area(s)
 - » from the senior ranks
 - » from schools ranked equal or above yours
- Try to meet the candidates on this list
 - » Talk to them at conferences
 - » Invite them to give a colloquium
 - » Interact with them at program committee meetings
 - » Visit them during your “pre-tenure” tour

Overall Advice

- 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 criticism/feedback/complaints seriously
- Do find mentors
- Do get along well with staff
- Do keep records
- Do choose your battles wisely
- 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 or be insincere
- Don't make enemies, but speak up