

UNDERSTANDING THE PROMOTION AND TENURE PROCESS*

Rice ADVANCE

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Abstract

This presentation focused on educating graduate students and post-docs who aspire to academic faculty positions regarding the university promotion and tenure process, and was authored by Jason Hafner (Physics & Astronomy), Kathleen Matthews (Natural Sciences), and Jennifer West (BIOE).

1 Goals

- Institution
 - Tenure is a life-long commitment by the university to you
 - Successful faculty – innovators, leaders, producers
 - Research objectives in line with institutional directions
- You
 - Faculty position that meets your own research and career objectives
 - Member of functional, innovative and forward-looking department and institution
 - Security offered by tenure

2 What can I do now?

Think about your steps all along the way

- Consistently evaluate your own progress
 - Goals
 - Mechanisms to get there
 - Ways to learn from others and engage them
- Keep data on all your activities
- Ask for feedback
 - Grant writing
 - Papers
 - Teaching
 - Research program organization and development

This process is the accumulation of years of effort! **THINK AHEAD!!**

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3 Understand the general process

- Learn about the promotion and tenure process at your institution
 - Ask about the process at every stage if you have questions
- Request a copy of the policy
 - Be sure when you are interviewing that the policy is consistent with your personal goals
- Understand the balance of teaching, research, and service that the institution AND the department will expect
- Understand the audience(s) for the materials

4 The Dossier

- Summary of your independent career at institution
- Information on all aspects of your career
 - Research summary (publications, grants, citations, awards)
 - Teaching summary (courses, evaluations, awards)
 - Service summary (activities, awards)
- Inside reviews/letters
- Outside letters****
 - Writers identified by department
 - Also usually writers identified by individual

5 Dossier Components

- Summary of career
 - Education
 - Honors
 - Teaching/advising/mentoring
 - Citations
 - Grants
 - Publications
 - Research/teaching summary written by candidate
- Outside letters

6 What happens after dossier is prepared?

1. Department review
 - Tenured faculty generally involved in decision to recommend or deny tenure
 - Department chair writes letter
 - Some schools have subcommittee
2. School review
 - Often school-level committee reviews and makes recommendation to dean
 - Dean makes recommendation
3. Promotion/Tenure Committee (Provost)
 - Makes recommendation to President

4. President sometimes makes final decision

Multiple levels of review — no one person makes the decision! **Many** voices are part of the process.

7 General process

- Understand the timing of preparing the dossier, what you should submit and when
 - Think carefully about names for Outside Letters
- Understand the process completely
- Don't wait until the last minute to prepare your materials
 - Think about your research/teaching summary
 - Ensure that your papers are submitted in a timely way
- Ask QUESTIONS if you do not understand

8 Outside letters

- Highly influential in decision process
- May have opportunity to suggest names
 - Develop relationships - create a network
 - **MARKET yourself!**
- Post-decision: Ask about possibility for feedback from the letters (can be useful)

Anticipate whom you would want to write letters and get to know those individuals

9 Factors considered

- Research
- Teaching
- Service

These factors combine to reach a decision, BUT the specific combination varies widely across institutions

10 Research

Publications

- Used to assess your productivity
 - Numbers vary widely among disciplines
 - Type of publications expected also vary widely
 - Different expectations at different promotion points
- Used to assess the quality of work produced
 - Citations, H-factor, Impact on the field
- Demonstrate your contributions
- Provide evidence of your unique contributions, particularly in collaborative/cross-disciplinary activities
 - How many? How much of your time?
 - Why did this matter? What did you and your discipline contribute?

Grants

- Important national review of work
- Demonstrate ability to secure funding for research

Presentations

- Invitations reflect status in the field

Visibility/Engagement/Focus

- Present at multiple conferences
- Engage the leaders at those conferences
- Invite leaders to your institution via department events
- Reflect on level of focus in work and, if broad, engage multiple communities

11 Teaching

- Effectiveness
 - Often evaluated by students
 - Ask assigned or selected mentor to provide review
- Innovation
 - Think about ways to do it better/more effectively
 - Engage students
- Range/breadth
 - Assignments may be focused or broad
 - Be prepared to teach beyond your comfort zone
- Enthusiasm
 - Convey why you love what you do
 - Occasionally volunteer for something extra
- Develop a portfolio of your teaching
 - Syllabi
 - Handouts, other notes on courses developed
 - Problem sets
 - Other written materials
 - Computer-based materials, notes on courseware
 - Copies of software developed for courses
 - Examinations
 - Copies of graded papers where there is a significant writing component
 - Evaluation by a colleague
 - Student evaluations

12 Service

- Department
 - Help your department accomplish the faculty's goals University
- University

- Engage in the broad community, but wisely — most P/T committees are broad
- National Organizations
 - Choose wisely for visibility with minimum time
- Civic/K12/Outreach Opportunities
 - Choose wisely, but make a difference

13 Keep your CV up to date

- Include students mentored at all levels (primary and secondary mentoring)
 - Undergraduates
 - Graduate Students
 - Post-doctoral Associates
- Include advising responsibilities at all levels
- Refereed publications
 - Some institutions request an evaluation of % effort on each
 - Citations — check your “h-factor”
- Abstracts / Conference Proceedings / Presentations
 - Seminars/Workshops/Panels/etc.
 - Posters
 - Invited talks at meetings
- Service within university, in community, at (inter)national level

14 P/T versus Performance Reviews

Ask your institution about frequency and nature of performance reviews

- Can be very helpful in guiding activities
- Opportunity for mid-term feedback
- Provide an internal view of accomplishments
 - Some may have external letters
 - Dossier can be similar to promotion dossier

15 Are there answers to my questions?

- How many publications do I need?
- How much grant funding?
- How many graduate students? Postdocs?
- How many committees? Which ones?
- How good must my teaching be? Does it matter?
- How do I know if I’m doing enough?

There are no “right” answers to these questions, because the process is a composite of all of these and varies from place to place:

FIND OUT WHAT YOU CAN ABOUT YOUR INSTITUTION - ASK QUESTIONS!!!