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

• 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, colloquium 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

... 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