Understanding the Promotion & Tenure Process

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Goals

- **Institution**
  - Tenure is a life-long commitment by the university to you
  - Successful faculty – innovators, leaders, producers
  - Research objectives need to align 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
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!!
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
General Process — The Dossier

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 – very important
  - Writers identified by department
  - Also usually writers identified by individual
Dossier Components

- CV as summary of career
  - Education
  - Honors
  - Teaching/advising/mentoring
  - Citations
  - Grants
  - Publications
  - Research/teaching summary written by candidate

- Outside letters
What Happens After Dossier Is Prepared?

- Department review
  - Tenured faculty generally involved in decision to recommend or deny tenure
  - Department chair writes letter
    - Some schools have subcommittee

- School review
  - Often school-level committee reviews and makes recommendation to dean
  - Dean makes recommendation

- Promotion/Tenure Committee (Provost)
  - Makes recommendation to President
  - President sometimes makes final decision
What Happens After Dossier Is Prepared?

- Department review
- School review
- Promotion/Tenure Committee (Provost)
- President may make final decision

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

- 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**
Factors Considered

- Research
- Teaching
- Service

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

Publications

- Demonstrate your contributions
- Provide evidence of your unique contributions, particularly in collaborative/cross-disciplinary activities
  - Issues of collaborators
    - How many? How much of your time?
  - Issues of cross-disciplinarity
    - Why did this matter? What did you and your discipline contribute?
Research

- 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
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
Teaching

- 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
Service

- Department
  - Help your department accomplish the faculty’s goals

- 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
Keeping a Complete Record

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/Panel/ etc.
  - Posters
  - Invited talks at meetings
- Service within university, in community, at (inter)national level
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
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!!!
Questions?

Ask many, ask often....