The Academic “Ladder”

Postdoc
Assistant Professor
Associate Professor
Professor

Chaired Professor

Department Head
Associate Dean
Dean

tenure
Tenure Process

Usually a six year “clock”

Find out the evaluation process -- common example…

Yearly written evaluations by Dept. Head (and perhaps P&T Committee)

Mid-tenure review by Dept. P&T Committee, Dept. Head, Dean and College P&T Committee
  • Some depts get external letters (3-6)

Sixth year promotion and tenure review
  • external letters (typically 8-15)
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
Understand your Institution

Expectations vary by institution – know yours!
Ask department chair/head, mentor, colleagues
Look at CVs of successful, recently tenured faculty

Find mentors
you may or may not have a formal mentor
different mentors for different activities (teaching, research, dept politics, etc)
  • ask for advice, feedback, examples, etc
Teaching

General tips

Want to do a good job while minimizing effort
Have an overall teaching plan/goals and update annually
Try to limit the number of new courses you teach/prepare
Shoot for a mix of ugrad (honors!) & grad (core, seminar) courses

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
Research Advising

Recruit good students
- Review applicants and make offers to top ones (TA from dept, RA, share with dept)
- Offer grad level reading courses (as overload if necessary)
- Undergrad (summer) research programs

Learn when and how to say "no"
- A bad student is worse than no students
- See them "in action" first (in class, trial project)

Balance PhD and MS students
- Try to graduate at least one PhD by year six
- Don’t take on too many MS students

Getting them to produce
- Build a mentoring hierarchy
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
Funding

Target funding opportunities
Visit funding agency sites regularly
  • Volunteer to serve on review panels
    ☸ For types of proposals you will submit – not the panels that are desperate for panelists...
  • Get on a funding opportunities mail list
Apply for junior faculty awards
  • NSF/ONR/ARL CAREER competitions
  • Other career development awards (industry, university)

Seek advice/examples from colleagues
  Ask successful colleagues to review your proposal and Listen to their feedback
  borrow sample proposals from successful colleagues

If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again
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
OK (good) to ask someone if you can recommend them as a letter writer
   • Provide them an easy way out -few people say “no” outright
Getting Known

Network at Conferences
  Go without a paper, introduce yourself

Talk tours
  Self invitation (I’ll be in area ....)

Proposal Review Panels, Journal refereeing, Conference PCs
  Volunteer yourself

Host Distinguished Lectures, invite others to visit and give talks
Choose Service that Matters!

- Find out what/how much service really counts
- Cost/benefit analysis
  + better environment
  + visibility/respect (external and from campus 'elders')
  + connections
  - stress
  - time
  - enemies
- Learn when/how/why to say no
- Quality & Reliability more important than quantity

Diagram:
- Local Arrange For Conference
- Technical Role in Top Conference
- Admission committee
- CRA-W DSW or DLS
- ABET Coord
- Space comm
- Ugrad Research Mentoring
- Somebody “should”
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 do too much, too early – don’t take every grad student who walks in your door or join all collaborations
Don’t be viewed as unsupportive of department goals
Don’t do anything that is unethical or makes you uncomfortable
Don’t brown-nose or be insincere
Don’t make enemies, but speak up