Promotion to the Next Level

Stephanie Forrest, Arizona State Univ
Ellen Zegura, Georgia Tech
Session Plan

• Start with: What is on your mind? What are you interested in doing and discussing?
• Stephanie’s story and advice
• Activity
• Ellen’s story and advice
• Activity
• Q&A
Stephanie’s Personal Path

• St. John’s College, B.A. (1977)
• Univ. of Michigan, M.S., Ph.D. (1982, 1985)
• Teknowledge Corp (1985-1988)
• Center for Nonlinear Studies, Los Alamos Nat. Lab.
  – Director’s Fellow, (1988-1990)
• University of New Mexico (1990 – 2017)
  – Assistant Professor (1990 – 1994); Assoc (1994-1999)
  – Full Professor (1999 – present)
• Arizona State University (2017 – present)
• Other activities
  – Santa Fe Institute: Interim VP Academic Affairs (1999 – 2000)
My Approach to Academia

- Training through
  - Tenure and promotion are waypoints not goals
- The vow
  - Move on when bitterness sets in
  - Avoid bitterness so I don’t have to move
- Joy
  - Only serious obligation is to tax payers and students
  - Faculty position is a tremendous opportunity
  - Run to work and smile
- Never make the mistake of thinking you are irreplaceable
Post-Tenure Pitfalls

• Failure to thrive
  – The 2\textsuperscript{nd} round of funding
  – The 2\textsuperscript{nd} round of graduate students
  – Existential dilemmas
• Expected to be a grownup
  – Extra service load
  – No mentors in sight
• The myth that anything else counts besides research
Promotion Packets

• Research maturity
  – Intellectual leadership and vision. Technical depth
  – Stable funding and student pipeline
  – Impact beyond narrow specialty

• Leadership
  – Committee and program Chairmanships, Editorships
  – Nominating others for awards
  – Curriculum development
  – Mentoring

• Teaching
  – Scope, excellence

• Service: Look for intrinsic merit, not volume
Growing a Research Group

• 5-10 students is qualitatively different from 3-4
  – Face time is not all it’s cracked up to be
  – 1-1 meetings vs. group sessions
  – Culture matters
• No time to program
• Leadership through intellectual vision and many informal encounters
• Write grants every year
Random Thoughts

• Take sabbaticals
• Decide who you are and take it seriously
• Avoid administration for as long as possible
  – Credibility
  – Hard to go back
  – We need more female superstars!
Participatory Exercise I

• Spend five minutes making a list of the strengths of your record vis a vis promotion
• Pair up and share your lists
• Share back to the group
Ellen’s (Odd) Story

- Tenured in 1999
- Assistant Dean for Space (new building)
- Interim Dean (six months in 2002)
- Associate Dean for Research, Space, Grad
- Promoted to Full Professor in 2004
- Also, two girls (1998, 2001), one awesome husband
My Qualifications

• Interim Dean during third year review process
• Chair of Computer Science from 2005-2012
• Currently Promotion and Tenure Chair for the College of Computing, incl. representing at Institute level with the dean
• Read and written many full professor letters
How I Think About Promotion

• Relatively narrow and well-defined path to Associate Professor with Tenure
• Can be multiple paths to Full Professor
• But...local norms matter a lot
• And...there is one sure path
The Sure Path

• Continued strong publications
• Continued strong funding
• PC chair for conference in your area
• Perhaps a seminal (“why now?”) event – examples:
  • PC chair for top conference
  • Leading large funding award
  • Breakthrough result
  • Credible threat to leave
Local Norms Really Matter

• There are places that ask “why now”
• There are places where everyone who remains productive is promoted after N years
• There are places where promotion recognizes significant contributions internally, even if not research
• There are places where you can languish at Associate Professor
• You need mentors at this level
Another (Radical?) View

• Tenure gives you freedom
• Do the service that matters to you
• Re-balance your time (towards teaching, towards different kinds of writing, towards making things happen internally, towards family, towards new areas)
• Don’t worry about promotion to Full
Participatory Exercise II

• Spend a few minutes identifying two things you would like to work on to strengthen your case for promotion
• Pair up and help your partner narrow to one
• Make a plan for next week, next month, and next year to make progress on your one choice
• What will you stop doing; what will change; what will you start doing?
Other Important Stuff

• Quality over quantity
• Deep thinking about diversity activities
• Types of leadership
Magic Wand Thought Exercise

• If you had a magic wand that made you a chaired distinguished full professor, what would you do?

• You should spend X% of your time on this. Discuss what is X.