

The Tenure Process

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**Slides borrowed heavily from past CRA-W Career
Mentoring Workshops**



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Who We Are – Holly Rushmeier

PhD Cornell 1988 (Mechanical Engineering)

Georgia Tech

Asst. Prof. 1988-1991 (Mechanical Engineering)

NIST

Research Staff 1991-1996

IBM Watson Research

Research Staff 1996-2004

Yale

Professor, 2004-present (Computer Science)
Dept. Chair, 2011-2014

Research

Computer Graphics, Realistic Rendering, Applications of Perception, Modeling Materials, Cultural Heritage and Digital Humanities

Who We Are – Dianne O’Leary

PhD Stanford 1976 (Computer Science)

University of Michigan 1975-1978

University of Maryland 1978-2014

Present: Distinguished University Professor Emerita

Research

Scientific computing, image and text processing



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The Academic “Ladder”

Postdoc

Assistant Professor

tenure

Associate Professor

Professor

Beyond professor:

Titles on research track:

Chaired Professor

Titles on administrative track:

Department Head

Associate Dean

Dean

...



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Tenure Process

Usually a six year “clock”.

Find out the evaluation process at **your** institution.

Typical example:

- Yearly *written* evaluations by Dept. Head (and perhaps Promotion & Tenure (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)



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No Substitute for Quality

Basic factors:

Excellence in research

Excellence in teaching

Excellence in service



*Relative importance
depends on institution*

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.



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Understand Your Institution

Expectations vary by institution – know yours!

- Ask department chair/head, mentors, colleagues.
- Look at CVs of recently tenured faculty.

Find mentors.

- You may or may not have a formal mentor.
- Use different mentors for different issues (teaching, research, dept politics, etc).
- Ask for advice, feedback, examples, etc.



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Teaching

General tips:

- Do a good job while guarding your time.
- Have an overall teaching plan/goal and update annually.
- Try to limit the number of new courses you teach.
- Shoot for a mix of undergrad (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-sabbatical,



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Teaching

Aim for **good perceptions** –
positive evaluations from students and peers.

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.
- Be reasonably responsive to on-line queries.

Don't be too hard **or** too easy. Good learning is not *hard* teaching.

Don't do evaluations right after an exam.

Get help:

Borrow from colleagues.

Use textbook aids.

Use campus support programs.



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Advising Students in Research

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).
- Offer undergrad (summer) research opportunities.

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.

Get them to produce.

- Build a mentoring hierarchy.



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Publications

Emphasize **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.



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Funding

Target funding opportunities.

- Visit funding agency sites regularly.
- Get on a funding opportunity mailing list.
- Volunteer to serve on review panels.
 - ✧ For types of proposals you will submit – not panels that are desperate for panelists...
- 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.**



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Service

- Find out what/how much service really matters to the department, to the school/college, to the university, to the profession, to you.
- Learn when/how/why to say no.
- **Quality** and **dependability** are more important than quantity.
- Do what's visible and will bring respect from your research community, from your campus and department “elders”.



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Getting Known

- Network at **quality** conferences.
 - Go even without a paper and introduce yourself.
- Take talk tours.
 - Self invitation to **quality** institutions (I'll be in area).
- Serve on proposal review panels.
- Volunteer to referee for a **quality** journal.
- Volunteer for **quality** conference program committees.
- Host Distinguished Lectures: invite others to visit and give talks.



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Prepare Your Strongest Case (from day 1 on the job)

Maintain a list of:

- Every committee (dates, role).
- Every conference/journal/agency that you referee for.
- Every service performed to university or profession.

Maintain a “Kudos” file.

Keep your online presence professional and up-to-date.



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Putting Your Case Together (Summer after 5th year)

1. Up-to-date cv, in “proper” format.
2. Teaching portfolio.
3. Research portfolio.
4. ** List of suggested letter writers.



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Teaching Portfolio

- **Teaching statement:**
 - Teaching philosophy (enthusiasm!)
 - Mentoring philosophy (enthusiasm!)
 - Accomplishments and plans.
 - Kudos: awards, quotes from students and peers, ...
- **Supporting material:**
 - Sample course material.
 - Unsolicited student testimonials.
 - Student and peer evaluations.
 - Videos.
 - Textbook, courseware, etc. authored by you.
 - Papers or presentations on education.



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Research Portfolio

- **Research statement:**
 - Keep your readers in mind!
 - Theme of your work and why important.
 - Most significant accomplishments.
 - Plans (enthusiasm!)
 - Kudos: awards, quotes from referees, etc.
 - **Software** artifacts.
 - Patents.
 - Grant support.
- **Supporting material:**
 - 5 important publications.



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External Letter Writers

- Some selected by you,
- Some selected by your department.
- Can sometimes blacklist one or two people--but do so carefully.
- Can sometimes informally suggest names.
- **Ask** each potential letter writer for permission.
 - Provide an easy out – few people say “no” outright.
 - Ask if the person can write a **strong** letter.
- Some departments exclude/include:
 - Thesis advisor.
 - Co-authors and collaborators.



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Overall Advice

- The **most important** thing is to **enjoy** your work...
 - ...while keeping in mind the milestones you need to reach to be successful.
- Strike a balance between your outside life and your career.
 - Don't be consumed by the process
- Above all, remember that there is life out there with **or** without tenure.



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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.

Helpful Resources

Vanderbilt University, “Teaching Portfolios”

<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-portfolios/>

Daniel Cosley, “Writing a Research Statement”

<https://blogs.cornell.edu/danco/2013/07/08/writing-a-research-statement-for-a-tenure-package/>

Radhiki Nagpal, “The Awesomest 7-Year Postdoc, or: How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Tenure-Track Faculty Life”

<https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/guest-blog/the-awesomest-7-year-postdoc-or-how-i-learned-to-stop-worrying-and-love-the-tenure-track-faculty-life/>