



# CRA 2022 Career Mentoring Workshop

## *“Preparing a Tenure Dossier”*

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# Personal and Corporate Missions



Our central mission is the development of human beings and society as a whole through the cultivation and enrichment of the human mind and spirit. The principal means by which our mission is accomplished are teaching, research, artistic creation, professional practice and selected forms of public service.

– *Mission Statement, University of Southern California*

- A career in academia, especially as a tenured faculty member, can be highly rewarding when personal and corporate (academic) missions both align
- Being granted tenure is simply one step along a long career arc, not the destination!

# Questions for Attendees



- What are some of the review/feedback processes along the TT at your institution?
- When/How is tenure review initiated and what are the steps at your institution?
- What are typical dossier components for promotion consideration at your institution?
- What are typical criteria/standards for being promoted with tenure at your institution?
- What role are external experts in the field (referee letter writers) expected to play?
- What general advice on being strategic in positioning yourself for successful promotion would you like to receive or might you share with others (peer-to-peer mentoring)?

# Various Review and Feedback Steps along the Tenure Track

There are various key “check-points” along the way intended to provide useful and constructive feedback regarding your progress and tenure trajectory:

- Periodic meetings with your Faculty Mentor(s), Dept Chair/Head, Vice Deans & Dean
- Annual Faculty Merit Review/Evaluation
- Mid-probationary (3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Year) Review
  - CV; research, teaching, service statements (& COVID Impact statement?); teaching evals
  - Possibly a few (3 - 4) external referee letters (from domain experts)
  - Faculty committee and Dept Chair assessments—input on “making sufficient progress?”
- Approval to be put up for Tenure Promotion, by your Tenure Decision Date (TDD)
  - Possible to get an extension to your TDD, without a “higher bar” needing to be met
  - Possible to be considered early, but do so only if “slam dunk” case; usually not advised
  - Possible to be denied from promotion consideration; notice given for “terminal year”

# Stages of Tenure Promotion Review Process



**When/How?:** Tenure review typically is initiated during latter part of Spring semester of the year before; typically concludes by latter part of the next Spring

- Stage 1: Candidate submits CV; statements (R/T/S; COVID Impact?); evidence of scholarship (3-5 papers); name(s) of potential referees, if/as allowed (late Spring)
- Stage 2: Dept Committee identifies and selects referees; Dept Chair solicits letters from referees (late Spring or early/mid Summer)
- Stage 3: Dossier is compiled and reviewed at Dept level (early Fall)
  - Teaching evals, quantitative peer cohort data, referee letters, Dept Cmte/Chair memos
- Stage 4: Dossier reviewed at School level (mid-late Fall)
  - Faculty Assessments include School Cmte memo(s), Dean's memo
- Stage 5: Dossier reviewed at University Cmte level and decision is rendered (early-mid Spring)

# Typical Criteria/Standards for Tenure Promotion



Candidate is widely recognized in the field as being a “Rising Star”; also is a “good” instructor; also contributes “adequate” internal service with “visible” external service

- Make significant scholarly contributions of impact to the field
  - Specific *impactful contributions* articulated in “substantive” referee letters
  - Key set of contributions were made *since TT faculty appointment*
  - Demonstrated ability to make *independent* research contributions
  - On a *promising trajectory* to continue making such contributions
- Possible quantitative indicators of scholarly accomplishments:
  - Winner of prestigious national and international *Early Career awards/honors*
  - Establish & sustain strong *extramurally-funded and thriving research program*
  - *Strong publication record* in leading venues; have highly cited work—“known for”
  - *Mentor students to graduation* and successful placement, especially PhD students
  - *Compare favorably to recently promoted TT faculty* at (aspirational) peer institutions

# Expert Assessment Provided by External Referees



**Referees get the candidate's CV, statements (all?), and sample of publications (possibly limited teaching materials also) are asked to provide their frank and candid assessment**

*We are seeking your assessment as to whether [candidate name]'s scholarship has demonstrated excellence and creativity, made important and original contributions, had an impact on the field, shows a clear arc of intellectual and creative development, and is widely perceived as outstanding. Every promotion [and granting of tenure] is expected to meet national and international standards of leading institutions as well as improve the overall stature of the [department/school]. We seek your frank and candid assessment. We are requesting an analytical evaluation, rather than general praise or advocacy. We also request that you identify the leading departments of [candidate name]'s field, and give us your candid judgment on whether [candidate name]'s scholarly work would meet the standards for promotion [and tenure] in those schools (assuming an opening existed and that teaching and service was acceptable). It will be studied closely by tenured faculty in the department and university promotion committees and officials.*

# General Advice on Being Strategic



**Be strategic in best positioning yourself for tenure promotion**

- **Be focused on building a thriving research program while satisfying other obligations**
- **Be amenable to (an initiator of) research collaborations to broaden your exposure**
- **Be assertive in writing and submitting papers to top places**
- **Be aggressive in submitting strong proposals to extramural sources (gov/ind/found)**
- **Be proactive in networking and presenting your work and ideas**
- **Be willing to be nominated for early career honors and awards**

**Take full advantage of all of the “check-points” available, to gauge your progress on TT**

- **Check-in with Faculty Mentor(s), Dept Chair, other administrators; seek out advice**
- **Don't be satisfied with only complementary/positive feedback; ask for constructive criticism to help you (re)calibrate and grow**
- **Do your own peer-cohort comparisons to understand better your strengths and possible areas for improvement and promising trajectory to be promoted**

**Take things one step at a time; success (*including tenure*) is within your reach!**