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Editors’ Introduction

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At the request of the 2017 UCEA Executive Committee, this UCEA Guidebook on Retention, Tenure, and Promotion was developed by a group of senior and emeriti professors who have spent decades in academia and have been dedicated leaders in the field of educational leadership. In addition, to maintain an intergenerational approach and to honor diversity, we invited UCEA’s Executive Committee members to review or coauthor selected chapters. Thus, The Guidebook presents the readership with the enriching viewpoints of a representative group of professors in our field.

The Guidebook does not supplant nor does it promote a certain platform for retention, tenure, and promotion (RTP) reviews. The users are encouraged to see this as a “guide” or a “blueprint” explaining what to expect before and while undergoing RTP review processes. Each institution, program, department, college, or unit may have its own set of guidelines that dictate its expectations. Such policies or regulations determine the criteria and procedures that an individual seeking RTP must follow. The Guidebook simply intends to provide extra support that faculty may need to pursue a successful career development path. In addition, advice is made available for senior faculty, chairs, deans, provosts, and so on involved in the RTP process.

Each Guidebook section has been kept intentionally brief yet comprehensive enough to define a critical point in a faculty member’s academic profession. Although we highly recommend reading all sections, each section can stand alone and at times intentionally repeats those areas that are important from one stage to another. Although short in length, the sections offer in-depth discussion on the different situations that may arise in a faculty member’s review process.

The Guidebook is advisory. We do not defend nor do we criticize the RTP process at any institution. The purpose is to provide advice from those who are or have been administrators, as well as those who have lived the RTP process in multiple settings and multiple roles. In addition, The Guidebook is intended to be user friendly and supportive of faculty navigating RTP. To date, the literature in higher education has covered RTP replete with advice on recommendations to faculty. However, RTP in educational leadership has rarely, if ever, been discussed with such depth and synthesis. Thus, this Guidebook will highlight and provide examples from professors of educational leadership to faculty in educational leadership. The authors and reviewers have been extensively involved in the success of faculty in our field.

An explanatory note to the readership is appropriate at this point. For this Guidebook, we, the editors, consciously avoided using the term “chapter” to more accurately represent the nature of the Guidebook contributions. Additionally, some authors wrote in the more familiar second-person voice, while others wrote in the third-person voice. We opted to let the authors’ voices come through as they intended, and thus the voices vary among sections. Following is a summary of each section.

In Section 1, Martha McCarthy and Joan Shapiro assert the importance that written policies and institutional norms play in the RTP. They advise junior faculty to seek mentors when these are
not assigned. The mentor can help in understanding the balance between teaching, research, and service. They point out how important it is for scholars to “establish a niche” normally outside of their unit and joining other scholars of like interest at professional conferences. They offer advice that assists the area of publications by reminding faculty to have manuscripts reviewed before they are submitted. They also recommend writing on a daily basis to remain productive. With reference to teaching, they advise faculty to seek the university’s support services in case they experience problems. In terms of service they warn against service demands that take time away from research and teaching. They end their section with a brief set of recommendations for those seeking promotion to the rank of professor.

Section 2 by Betty Merchant and Gerardo López is focused on the various preparation activities that need to take place for midtenure or retention review. They articulate the importance of maintaining balance personally as well as professionally—an area usually not discussed in the literature. They clarify “the balancing act” and delineate the responsibilities that must be carried out by the faculty member. They include time management tips. They discuss evidence of productivity, including organizing files and materials. They provide the details and the milestones connected with teaching, research, and service. They discuss an area of citizenship, leadership, advocacy, and activism that is used by some universities. The authors feature the midtenure review portfolio’s critical elements: how to name and frame one’s line of inquiry, how to write a professional statement for multiple review audiences, and how to document one’s productivity.

Section 3 by Gary Crow and Mónica Byrne-Jiménez openly discusses activities and preparation for tenure and/or promotion to associate professor rank. Multiple examples are presented to make certain critical steps are clear that bring this section to life. Their tone is very frank and definitive. They discuss the difference between midtenure review and the expectations that arise after this step. They explain how important a team of mentors can be in the development of a novice faculty member. They complete the discussion on mentorship by describing the different types of mentors and where and how to find them. They explain how to prepare a good professional statement, sometimes the most challenging portion of the review portfolio to develop. They further clarify how to provide evidence of productivity and professional contributions. They continue with a list of recommendations on finding acceptable reviewers as well as what types of reviewers to avoid. The evidence for teaching productivity is also explained in a clear and forthright manner, including how to include documentation on controversial courses that might be evaluated poorly by students. They also bring in information on how to feature one’s research “story,” even raising issues about interdisciplinary and collaborative research. They address service activities with the same detail, including the issue of additional responsibilities sometimes placed on faculty of color. They end their section with a complete description of “The Box,” which is another name for a complete application and portfolio for tenure.

In Section 4, Mary Driscoll presents the reader with advice on what to do during that period of “suspense” as well as after a review decision has been reached. She even covers both scenarios: what to do given a positive outcome and—equally important—what to do if the outcome is negative. She promotes the continuous theme of “know thy university well.” For example, she reminds the reader that it is important to know institutional guidelines on the selection process for external reviewers. Another issue is understanding institutional expectations for submitting
one’s documentation and materials. All the levels of reviews—both internal and external—are described. The author also addresses the possibility of a negative outcome, looking at both sides of an appeal in the case of a negative review. She clearly tells the readers what to do and from whom to seek advice during this most difficult time. She completes her section by describing some possible questions about self-exploration as well as professional advice on what to do for those who received a positive outcome.

Section 5, by Bruce Barnett and Leonard Burrello, contains a complete explanation of preparing for promotion to the rank of professor. The coauthors lay out an introduction that explains what research tells us about faculty who achieve the rank of associate professor and suggest that university criteria on how to reach the rank of professor is often less clear than earlier career stage expectations. They present examples on how the expectations in research, teaching, and service as well as in leadership, citizenship, advocacy, and activism may change for those attempting to reach the professor rank. Another important component of reaching the professor rank is in preparing for and developing detailed documentation for promotion review. One rarely finds this thorough an explanation regarding this final developmental stage of the professoriate.

In the last section, Section 6, Paula M. Short offers advice to those involved in reviewing candidates for RTP. Each administrative level is addressed beginning with the department or program’s senior faculty, chairs of review committees, and the department chairs. She delineates how they can provide support to candidates. This section also points out the importance of designating one person to oversee the college-level review process, including establishing and keeping a timeline. The author (with ample experience in these areas) unequivocally states that clear and detailed information on expectations should be available to candidates. At the university level, the author continues to define the responsibilities and the related activities from the president’s and provost’s offices. Another segment in this section explains long-term support for assistant to associate professor with tenure candidates. This part looks at how the department should include continuous support in the areas of teaching, research, and service with several examples on what to do. The last segment covers promotion from associate to full professor. The author covers long-term support and what each level involved in the process can do to ensure it is provided.

In summary, the UCEA Guidebook on Retention, Tenure, and Promotion offers faculty as well as their administrators concrete advice and specific recommendations for success. These sections provide faculty substantial knowledge by which to make powerful choices related to their RTP process. This UCEA Guidebook further challenges administrators to facilitate RTP by providing supports early on, making policies clear, and providing requirements for faculty to follow. In turn, the Guidebook cautions faculty members seeking RTP to carefully read and ask questions even before hiring takes place. In addition, candidates must completely understand the RTP process at their own institution. Then, they must use this information to become responsible for following the process with help from a team of mentors. We hope that by sharing the sound advice from knowledgeable and experienced faculty contained in this Guidebook, (a) readers will become acquainted with typical RTP practices in the field of educational leadership, and (b) the field of educational leadership will benefit from the successful RTP of productive and exemplary faculty.
Section 1: Written Policies and Institutional Norms

Martha McCarthy, Loyola University
Joan Shapiro, Temple University

It is imperative for individuals looking ahead to tenure and promotion decisions to understand their own institutional policies and norms, as well as guidelines from their school/college and departments, which may not always be exactly the same. Most universities and schools/colleges of education have adopted explicit tenure and promotion policies. Faculty governance groups make an effort to be extremely clear in developing these policies, which basically form a contract with the affected faculty members. Accordingly, if an individual is judged on criteria not included in the policies, this can be used as grounds to challenge a negative tenure or promotion decision. Often, but not always, when policies are changed, candidates in the pipeline are given the option of using the newly adopted policy or being grandfathered so they can use the policy under which they were hired.

Generally, the first level of review in the tenure and promotion process occurs at the department level. The next review takes place at the school/college level, usually by a committee representative of the faculty and then by the dean. The final level is the university review committee and the chief academic officer of the campus. Of course, the levels of review differ across institutions depending on organizational structure and size. In some institutions, if the favorable decisions are unanimous at the department and school/college levels, the university review is minimal. For additional information on the procedural details, see Section 5 of this volume.

There are differences across departments in what is considered essential for a favorable tenure or promotion decision within the institutional procedures. This means that a unit (department or program area) can comply with the process crafted by the institution and school/college but place particular emphasis in certain areas. For example, most departments in schools and colleges of education emphasize the publication of academic peer-reviewed articles in contrast to books. However, some disciplines or units may expect tenure candidates to have a book in press, and authored books are given more weight than edited volumes. Units also may differ as to the utility of single-authored and coauthored research. That is, some departments may more highly value single-authored or lead-authored work as evidence of scholarly independence, whereas other units may encourage faculty collaboration and thus place more value on coauthored scholarship. Additionally, service expectations in terms of the value of institutional versus national service can differ across departments and schools/colleges. Faculty members in schools/colleges of education always have difficulty in finding the appropriate balance among teaching, service, and research activities as service demands and teaching expectations are higher than in many other academic fields. It is very important for candidates to understand the idiosyncrasies of their unit’s norms in addition to the published institutional and school/college policies.

Mentors

Many departments routinely assign a mentor to new faculty members. These mentors can be helpful in reviewing professional statements where candidates are expected to discuss their research, teaching, and service accomplishments and how activities in these three areas related to
Mentors also can advise faculty regarding the activities they should pursue prior to tenure and promotion decisions. The mentor can provide very useful advice in connection with teaching, service, and research activities to pursue, as well as how to more effectively integrate or enhance coherence among these three primary areas of responsibility. If a specific unit does not assign a mentor, the new faculty member should contact the department chair for assistance in this regard or informally find a senior faculty member who can provide such advice. And if new faculty members are hesitant to pose certain questions to colleagues in their own units, they should contact a professional association for help in securing mentors at other institutions. For example, the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) has a group of recently retired faculty members who regularly meet and can serve in this capacity. Also, UCEA and other organizations offer specific conference sessions for new faculty to interact with senior faculty who can provide meaningful advice. In addition, there are national mentoring programs, such as the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity. These cross-institutional relationships, like within-unit mentors, can be extremely beneficial. In all mentoring relationships, it is important for the mentor–mentee fit to be good.

Faculty members who have been recently promoted and tenured also can serve as informal mentors. It can be very useful for a tenure candidate to review dossier materials of colleagues who recently have been successful in navigating the tenure process. Indeed, having multiple mentors at various levels can be invaluable, as they can provide different perspectives on the tenure and promotion process.

**Area of Primary Strength**

At many institutions, candidates for tenure and promotion are expected to select research, teaching, or service as their area of primary strength. This area is expected to meet the standard of “excellent,” whereas the other two areas must be considered at least “adequate” or “satisfactory.” The criteria for excellence and satisfactory will vary among institutions and should be clear in the tenure and promotion policies. Some institutions allow tenure and promotion candidates to present a balanced case in that they are more than satisfactory, but not quite excellent, in each of the three categories. Candidates should use caution in selecting this option as it is difficult to substantiate “near excellence” in each of the three areas. Most tenure candidates employed in research institutions are encouraged to use research as their primary area of strength, although on occasion candidates have been tenured based on their exemplary teaching—especially at teaching institutions. Usually, this would require teaching awards and recognition beyond their own institutions. Rarely, if ever, are faculty members tenured based on excellence in service. These three areas are explored in more detail below.

**Research and Scholarship**

Having a research plan is crucial, but this does not mean the individual has to confine research and writing to a single topic. However, establishing a niche or “line of inquiry” and getting well known among the small group of scholars with similar interests is important. Not only can these individuals then serve as outside reviewers during the tenure and promotion process, but they also will often become collaborators on research projects. (It is important to note that coauthors and prior doctoral supervisory faculty are not typically allowed to serve as tenure and promotion reviewers due to the close relationship to the candidate.)
Most new faculty are encouraged to write articles from their dissertation research and not to try to publish their dissertation as a book. Often valuable time is wasted trying to make the dissertation book-worthy, when getting several peer-reviewed articles published would make a larger contribution to the literature and start building the individual’s body of scholarly work. Candidates also need to consider the reputation of the publication outlets for their work, as having at least a portion of the articles in well-respected journals with rigorous peer-review procedures will likely be important. It is essential to know the institutional and unit norms in this regard.

Some institutions may distinguish research and scholarship. In these instances, research may focus more on empirical articles, often reporting quantitative or qualitative data findings (and perhaps externally funded), whereas scholarship may be more conceptually oriented, utilizing theoretical, historical, and narrative forms of expression. Scholarship on teaching has gained status in some, but not all, institutions, so candidates for tenure and promotion need to understand their institutional values.

Increasingly, institutions are expecting candidates for tenure and promotion to have received external grants or at least have evidence that proposals for such grants have been submitted. Units differ in this regard, as external funds are very difficult to obtain in some specialization areas. If housed in a department with high expectations for grant activity, individuals in subfields without external funding sources must be prepared to explain persuasively why other aspects of their dossiers should be given greater consideration.

New faculty members would be wise to ask senior colleagues to review their work before submitting manuscripts for publication (even though new faculty often are hesitant to do this because they are not confident about the quality of their work or they do not want to bother senior colleagues). Most senior faculty members are pleased to do so and will offer useful suggestions, including which journals may be most appropriate to submit a manuscript for consideration. Making improvements on a manuscript based on the advice of trusted and seasoned scholars can greatly reduce one’s likelihood of having manuscripts rejected in the initial publication review process. Dissertation advisors also can be helpful in this regard, and even graduate students or former members of one’s doctoral cohort can review work in progress. Having others review and comment on prepublication manuscripts will have great pay off for new faculty members, not only in improving the quality of the manuscripts but also in having colleagues invested in one’s work achievements. Junior faculty are cautioned not to be defensive and to pay close attention to the advice offered. Not all suggestions need to be followed, but they should at least be considered.

For academics, it is advantageous to have at least one research project in progress at all times. And faculty members should set aside time each day to work on the project. When a day goes by without doing so, it is easy to let another day pass, and then a week, which means you are having to continually reorient yourself to the project. Spending some time each day on research and writing will have tremendous benefits. However, if this is not possible, then it is important to find blocks of time each week to focus on research and writing. Faculty members should reserve the time of the day or week when they are the most productive; in short, faculty need to know their own strengths and weaknesses. For example, perhaps a given faculty member can do editing late at night, but creative activities need to take place before noon. A colleague may be
more productive in the evenings when a large block of time is available. Also, new faculty members should not be discouraged if they are not getting pieces published in their 1st year in academe. This is a period of acclimation, and it takes a while for manuscripts to go through the review process.

Unlike the norm in the field of law, where manuscripts are sent simultaneously to numerous law journals, in the social sciences, individuals are expected to submit their manuscripts to one journal at a time. To do otherwise is considered unethical. Once accepted for review, the manuscript is sent to external reviewers, and this process can take several months. After the external reviews are returned, the editors usually suggest revisions based on the reviews. The suggested revisions should be taken seriously and responded to as thoroughly and quickly as possible. This entire process can take 6 months or longer before the manuscript is finally published.

During the promotion and tenure process, committees place considerable weight on outside assessments of the quality of the candidate’s published work from those who are highly regarded in the field. Thus, early on the candidate needs to be thinking about which senior individuals to include on his or her list of external referees—individuals need to be at comparable institutions and preferably at full professor rank. Research collaborators usually will not be eligible to serve as referees. Often the candidate submits a list of potential referees, and the department chair (or school/college dean) submits a similar list. Requests for an assessment of a sample of the candidate’s research are made to individuals drawn from both of these lists. In some research institutions, the number of outside reviewers expected for each candidate has grown. So, it is important to network in your area of expertise to make certain you can suggest a reasonable number of senior scholars from comparable colleges/schools.

**Teaching**

Education faculty are expected to excel as teachers. Teaching is time consuming, and junior faculty members need to limit the number of new course preparations they have. If it seems that the number of new course preparations is overly burdensome, a conversation with the department chair would be in order so needed adjustments can be made. The new faculty member’s mentor can be supportive in arguing for a reduction in such course preparations. As with teaching several different courses, teaching online courses can be arduous. However, some junior faculty members prefer teaching online. It is important to know whether any additional consideration is given to teaching courses by distance education. If a faculty member at any level is facing teaching challenges, he or she needs to know what institutional support services are available to provide assistance. And having senior colleagues provide peer reviews of teaching can be beneficial in developing a tenure or promotion dossier.

As with all faculty, junior faculty are expected to advise students. The number of advisees varies greatly across institutions and can depend on the number of years an individual has been in academe. Often research institutions protect junior faculty members from chairing doctoral dissertations until they are tenured or close to that stage. However, at some universities, new faculty are expected to direct dissertations early in their careers. Dissertation advising requires a considerable investment of time, and candidates need to be certain that it is given appropriate weight in their tenure and promotion dossiers.
Service

The hope is that new faculty members will be protected from extensive service activities at their home institutions, because service demands can take time away from essential teaching and research. This is not always the case, unfortunately, so new faculty must carefully evaluate service requests. Some national service can be advantageous, as it shows the individual is becoming known in professional circles. Also, since education is an applied field, some connections with practitioners are expected. Some service areas may dovetail well with the research/scholarship and teaching foci of a junior professor. In those cases, service can be beneficial and can be of help in obtaining promotion and tenure. The faculty member’s mentor can be very helpful in providing suggestions regarding how to deal with too many service requests, which service activities have the most benefit for junior faculty, and how much time should be devoted to professional service. For example, some units may value departmental service more highly for junior faculty, whereas others may prefer candidates to have more institutional service. National service in terms of involvement in professional associations is usually valued across universities, but junior faculty members should ensure that such service does not take time needed for them to conduct research. Again, junior faculty need to take the time to understand the institutional and unit norms regarding the expectations for service.

Candid

Most of the discussion in this section has focused on tenure candidates, as it is assumed that faculty members being considered for the rank of professor are very familiar with institutional policies and norms. Nonetheless, a few comments about promotion to the rank of professor seem warranted. At most institutions, only those activities since promotion to associate professor are considered in the decision to promote an individual to full professor rank. Most candidates use research/scholarship as their primary strength, but some candidates have been successful using teaching as their primary area. Similar to the tenure decision, teaching awards and recognition beyond one’s home institution would be required for teaching to be the basis for promotion to full professor. Unlike the tenure decision, individuals have been promoted to professor rank with service as their primary strength, but this is quite rare. To do so would require significant national service as well as exemplary institutional contributions. And all candidates for promotion to full professor are expected to have evidence of national stature in the field, which might entail holding office or chairing committees in professional associations and serving on editorial boards for major journals in the field. See Section 6 for additional information on promotion to professor.

Play it Forward

When putting together a dossier for tenure and/or promotion, the candidate may note particular aspects of the criteria of the school/college or institution that seem inappropriate or misleading. For example, if the school/college distributes a list of types of publications given weight in making the tenure decision, the candidate may note that some significant aspects of his or her work are not included (e.g., project reports or evaluation studies). Clarification of how those items are considered is important, so the candidate needs to ask the chair, dean, or others to explain the criteria. This query may reveal that some features of the policy need to be reviewed and possibly revised (e.g., the list of items that “count” as research may need to be expanded). If the candidate is able to get such clarification and possibly a policy amendment, the process will
run more smoothly. And securing such policy changes also will help those in the pipeline, so they may have an easier time when developing their dossiers. Although it is not always the case, the tenure and promotion process should be a two-way street. This means that helpful comments and suggested modifications from those being evaluated should be heard and should inform the process for future candidates.
Section 2: Preparation for Midtenure Retention Review

Betty Merchant, University of Texas at San Antonio
Gerardo R. López, University of Utah

As you prepare for your midtenure review, it is essential that you have clarity surrounding your personal and professional priorities—for these priorities will guide you in allocating your time and energy at your work and nonwork environments. Working from a strong core of values and beliefs will help protect you from being pulled in all sorts of directions, some of which may be counterproductive (or even destructive) to those priorities.

The promotion and tenure process can be fundamentally unbalancing. Unless you can return to the core of who you are and what’s important in your life, you risk allowing your personal worth to be defined solely by the procedures and outcomes associated with the promotion and tenure process. The vast majority of junior professors always worry about having “enough” publications to make it through the retention process. Unfortunately, there is no magical number or secret formula that can guarantee retention at any institution. As such, it is critically important to focus on what’s important to you and to find balance in your personal and professional priorities. Put simply: Operate from your core, and trust that to guide you through the process. Below, we offer some pointers that can help you in your academic journey.

The Balancing Act

At its worst, the promotion and tenure process can be personally and professionally destabilizing. At its best, the process can be a mechanism for organizing and highlighting your activities in teaching, scholarship, and service. It’s up to you to create a balance with respect to how you spend your time as an assistant professor on the path to promotion and tenure. You cannot expect your department chair or colleagues to do this for you (in fact, they are likely to be struggling with this issue themselves!). Some general principles in finding the right balance for you include (a) remind yourself of what and who you’ve identified as most important in your life, and then allocate your time and energy accordingly; and (b) be mindful of your own health, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs and tend to these.

With these considerations taken into account, you then will need to develop a professional routine where you spend a specific amount of time each day on job related-activities: conducting and writing your research, preparing your classes, performing service-related activities, and so on. It’s worth taking the time to develop this routine jointly with any significant others in your life, including children (if applicable). This way, everyone will understand what you’re trying to accomplish, and you also will understand others’ needs and goals.

Working toward promotion and tenure can be a pretty self-absorbing process that can leave others in your life feeling abandoned and devalued. In the end, you must assume responsibility for finding and maintaining your own balance as much as you are able and for forgiving yourself and others when your balancing efforts fall short. In sum, it’s the work–life balance that will keep you progressing steadily toward your goal.
Time Management

Most time management advice boils down to a few deceptively simple approaches that are somewhat challenging to actually implement. These suggestions generally include the following:

1. Identify the task that you want to accomplish, and then break it down into its more manageable component parts.
2. Identify specific completion dates for each of these component parts, and schedule time on your calendar for working on them. Although you may not always be able to adhere to the schedule you’ve made, holding yourself accountable for following it as closely as possible will increase the likelihood that you will maintain steady progress toward your goal.
3. Find a physical space where you can work most efficiently (probably not at home) and assemble all the tools and materials you need to work in that space.
4. Protect time every day to work on the identified task. (Note: the amount of writing you accomplish is less important than actually adhering to the routine daily.) This involves finding a time when you can work most efficiently, without being distracted by other people.
5. Do a brief daily and weekly review of your progress in meeting your goals, and make any necessary adjustments in your routine.

Evidence of Productivity

Evidence of productivity in teaching, scholarship, and service is best assembled as you complete the activities in each of these areas. If your university has a faculty database for entering this information, learn to use it. Otherwise, organize your files to reflect your activities in each of the areas below. It will be a huge relief to have kept track of all these things as you go along. The consequences of not taking this approach wreak incredible havoc on people who frantically try to throw things together for a performance review at the very last minute.

Your efforts should be consistent with your personal/professional statement about your goals in research, teaching, and service. The materials you submitted when applying to your current position should contain at least a brief description of your philosophy in these areas. This can serve as the basis for a more comprehensive statement about each area in the materials you produce for your tenure and promotion packet. This statement also can serve as a useful guide in helping you to decide which projects to undertake and which to reject during the pretenure years. Additionally, depending on the level of detail included in the offer letter you received for your current position, it could be useful to compare your progress toward tenure with the expectations stated in this letter.

Below are some brief pointers that ought to be included in respective sections, when organizing your dossier. (Although these reflect the norms in most doctoral-granting institutions, there are exceptions, and it is essential that you understand the expectations for tenure and promotion at your specific university.)

Milestones in research. These would include grant awards, publications in peer-reviewed academic journals, publications in practitioner journals, peer-reviewed scholarly presentations at
conferences, and invited presentations. It is important to indicate the unique contributions of your work and the ways in which you have had an impact on the field or practice.

Other indicators include the number of times your work has been cited and the ranking of the outlets in which you’ve published your work. It is important to organize your research into categories that are commensurate with the areas you’ve identified as your primary research interests. This process will help you identify any gaps in your research plan that you need to address during the pretenure years. Moreover, this will help you prepare the narrative you’ll provide to the internal and external reviewers of your work as part of the promotion and tenure process.

**Milestones in teaching.** These would include such things as teaching awards, development of new syllabi, creative approaches to pedagogy, incorporation of technology or novel approaches to teaching and learning, contributions to curriculum development, cross-departmental and cross-college collaborations that result in new interdisciplinary courses, and the creation of courses that address special issues or critical topics that have not been taught before.

**Milestones in service.** Sometimes new assistant professors are warned against performing too much service during their pretenure years. However, it’s also important to be viewed as “a good citizen” in your department and to be recognized for your service in your university and discipline. That notwithstanding, the category of service can be the most problematic for assistant professors—particularly females and scholars of color, who are often disproportionately assigned to committees that require significant amounts of time and energy, yet have relatively little stature in promotion and tenure decisions.

It is important that you try to perform service in areas that correlate with your stated research and teaching interests and in which you are able to demonstrate successful leadership. Milestones could include awards for service within the academic community, awards or distinctions for disciplinary service, letters praising you for outstanding service performed on various committees (departmental, college, university, state, national, international), and leadership roles you have performed in conjunction with your service activities.

**Other (e.g., citizenship, leadership, advocacy, and activism).** Although not traditional areas of evaluation, these are important considerations and should be included as valuable service activities. Such activities could include facilitating or leading community forums to address critical issues (such as voting rights), organizing town halls to analyze current and planned governmental policies (local, state, national, or international), engaging communities in civic participation, and providing expert testimony at various hearings to advocate for social justice issues. As a generalization, these types of activities are best presented in ways that demonstrate how they are related to one’s professional expertise and research or teaching interests.

**Developing the Midtenure Review Portfolio and Documentation**

Beginning in your 1st year, it is essential that you have open discussions with your senior colleagues and department head regarding your goals and plans for the future. Senior faculty in UCEA also can provide valuable insights into this process. Documenting materials in your dossier should be an ongoing activity, so that by the time of the formal midtenure review, you will be able to present a more thoughtful and revised document. If you leave this to the last
minute, you will be rushed in gathering all your materials while trying to update your curriculum vita (CV) and getting everything in order. Don’t let this happen. Stay on top of your dossier by updating early and updating often. Below are some further tips you should consider as you think about how to best present your body of scholarship to others in the broader research community.

**Name and frame one’s lines of inquiry.** As stated above, it’s important to identify and frame your lines of inquiry persuasively and compellingly before you start out as an assistant professor. Senior scholars can be a valuable source of assistance in this endeavor. Perhaps you can use the statement you included in your faculty application packet as a base from which to work. If you have not yet done this by this time in your career, it is not too late to start—just know that you are already behind. How you frame your line of inquiry ultimately will be the basis for how your scholarship will be judged by others in the research community.

It is important that you share your statement with at least two senior scholars whom you respect and trust. One of these individuals should be someone who is not particularly familiar with your areas of inquiry, thus requiring the sort of clarification and specificity from you that will be extremely useful in revising your statement to ensure that it is clear and well-integrated for everyone else who will later review your statement. Requesting feedback from your colleagues and department chair, particularly at the 2-year mark, will provide you with critical information regarding the “fit” of your research, teaching, and service with your department. If the information you receive at this point indicates otherwise, you will still have time to realign your activities accordingly, or if necessary, to keep a watchful eye for a more suitable position at another university.

**Write a professional statement for multiple review audiences.** Your professional statement is an opportunity to “name and frame” who you are and what you do. Your professional statement should be specific, yet universal, in nature—as multiple audiences (both inside and outside your institution) ultimately will read your statement. At some intuitions, external reviewers are required for all midtenure faculty reviews. At other institutions, an internal faculty committee handles the midtenure review. In the same vein, some institutions require students to review faculty teaching for the midtenure review, whereas other institutions do not. Regardless of your institution’s policies and norms, you need to think of your midtenure statement as a “trial run” for when you formally submit your dossier for promotion and tenure.

Keep in mind that material in your promotion and tenure packet will be reviewed by many people: the tenured faculty in your department, your department chair, external reviewers, college promotion and tenure committees, your dean, institutional promotion and tenure committees, your provost, and other institutional bodies. Most of these individuals will not have expertise in your research area or discipline. Because of the nature of the review process, it is wise to think about your statement in both specific terms as well as broader terms and write your statement accordingly. Don’t be afraid to ask your tenured colleagues for a copy of their statements, as this can help you strike the right balance when crafting your own statement.

**Documenting productivity.** It is important to note that whereas every institution has unique policies, guidelines, and criteria surrounding the promotion and tenure process, it is still incumbent on you to package yourself as best as possible in your dossier. In addition to your professional statement, it is wise to create additional tables, charts, narrative summaries, and the
like that can help your readers better understand your research, teaching, and service contributions. These can include, but are not limited to, the following:

- detailed descriptions of the journals in which you published (including circulation numbers, audience, etc.);
- acceptance rates of journals in which you published;
- table demonstrating “impact factor” of your publications;
- list of coauthored publications, which include the “percent contribution” to each scholarly product;
- list of any coauthors and their contact information;
- summaries of teaching evaluations by year;
- summaries of teaching evaluations by course;
- narrative summary of student comments of courses taught;
- graphs demonstrating growth in teaching through time;
- table of PhD, EdD, and Master’s committees and your role (chair, cochair, member);
- list of manuscripts you reviewed for journals (including the dates when you did those reviews); and
- list of conference paper proposals you have reviewed (including dates).

Clearly, everyone will have a different way to structure and present their dossier. In thinking about how to do this, it can be helpful to look at the dossier of a faculty member who was most recently tenured or promoted in your department. Additionally, reviewing the dossiers of one or two successfully tenured or promoted faculty members from other departments in your college could provide further guidance to you. How to best present yourself and your work is up to you. Getting feedback from a colleague or senior mentor is particularly advised as you document your productivity and contributions to the field.
Section 3: Preparation for Tenure and/or Promotion Review to Associate Professor Rank

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In this section, we move to a focus on the actual tenure/promotion review. In most cases the tenure review occurs simultaneously with the promotion to associate professor rank. In some universities, the faculty and subsequent reviewers in the process take separate votes on tenure versus promotion, but the review for each decision involves similar criteria. The exception to simultaneous review may occur if you were hired at the associate level. In this case, the review and vote focus only on the tenure case.

Our suggestions for this important stage in your tenure/promotion cycle focus on the activity and preparation for the review and your documentation intended to demonstrate the value of your contributions to teaching, research, and service. We begin by answering the question of what is different about this review from previous reviews, including seeking out mentors. Then we move to a consideration of the evidence of productivity and contributions—your professional/personal statement in general, the role and selection of external reviewers, and evidence of teaching, research, and service. The section ends with some suggestions for organizing your documentation/portfolio in ways that clearly and persuasively record your scholarship. As we have noted throughout this guidebook, our words of encouragement and suggestions for producing the most effective and persuasive documentation of your record must be taken as supplementary to the tenure/promotion guidelines and criteria—both named and unnamed of your university.

What’s Different from Previous Reviews?

It is your 3rd or 4th year as an assistant professor. You have received favorable comments from your midtenure review and you are feeling pretty good. “This tenure thing isn’t THAT bad,” you say with a small measure of relief. You think, I just need to keep doing what I’m doing. Except, you don’t know that that is not what tenure committees think …

Most midtenure reviews are really seen as formative assessments. If you are “behind” on your publications or your teaching is subpar, you are given a stern warning to step it up (if you are lucky, you are given additional supports). If you’ve kept up with your work and teaching, you are reappointed/retained with the news that you are well-positioned for tenure. Most may interpret that as an indication that your current level of productivity—and teaching—is “fine.”

There are, however, two subtle messages that rarely make it into the conversation between senior and junior faculty:

1. The expectation for increasing scholarly independence. Now that you have left doctoral student and dissertation life far behind, committees expect you to rely less on dissertation research and your advisor and more on your own evolving research agenda. Publishing several articles from your dissertation may get you through midtenure review, but that alone will not get you through tenure. Committees expect to see an increasingly complex research agenda and evidence of an evolving scholar.
2. *The expectation that your productivity will increase as you get closer to tenure review.*
   Early career faculty who do not churn out more papers, more manuscripts, more revise and resubmits, and more grant applications in those years between midtenure and tenure review may be in for a surprise when promotion and tenure committees return a less than favorable assessment. Committees want to see a steady—and increasing—stream of publications (i.e., in development, submitted, under review, revise and resubmit, resubmitted).

These two expectations are different and related. Committees are not looking for you to repurpose your dissertation for different outlets. Committees are looking for new and original research that could and should emerge from your previous dissertation research (i.e., new research questions, new research contexts). They are also looking for new lines of inquiry that may have evolved from what you have done in the past. They are looking for how your research—old and new—is contributing to a specific area in the field and how your work “enhances” the status of the university. Do not forget that.

These expectations emerge from the assumption that your socialization as an academic and as a member of a new organization is done. Since you spend *less* time understanding program norms and practices, *less* time shaping your role in the program and school, *less* time preparing for class, you have *more* time for research and writing. You can see why committees, therefore, expect increasing productivity in the years leading up to your review.

A related note, as scholars it is important to anchor current promotion and tenure expectations with long-term career goals. In other words, you want to have accurate information that could help you move to whatever level institution and faculty you may want to join in the future. You already know that different institutions have different expectations, so be certain that you are meeting the criteria for any aspirations you may have. You want to make sure that whatever institution you are at, you are there because you *want* to be, not because you do not have other options.

As a novice academic, the role of mentoring is essential. You should expect to be mentored and those around you expect you to ask for mentoring. In some contexts, if you don’t ask, you don’t receive. Professional associations, specifically University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), have individuals willing to serve as mentors. If you seek out senior scholars, be ready to ask questions and to make yourself available for guidance. It is important to stop and think about the kinds and styles of mentoring:

- **Formal and informal:** Formal mentors, either in your institution or professional organization, often have received some training and some specific guidance about their role with the clear purpose of making your transition successful. Informal mentors can be more responsive to any issues that you bring to them with little thought to their role or maintaining an ongoing relationship.
- **Within and without your institution:** Mentors within your institution can help with local norms, expectations, and politics. Mentors outside your institution can help you make sense of your local context and offer alternative insights or explanations, while informing you of other realities.
• *Same race/ethnicity/gender/sexual orientation:* Mentors of the same race/gender/sexual orientation often have experienced the same challenges of isolation; incongruence; and balancing community, family, and individual expectations. It is empowering to know that (a) you are not alone, and (b) others “like you” have been successful in attaining tenure and promotion.

• *Different race/ethnicity/gender/sexual orientation:* Mentors of different race/gender/sexual orientation can share their experience and offer their own insights into a process that may continue to privilege White and male ways of knowing and being.

• *Specific skill set and broad:* Tenure is assessed along three axes (teaching, research, and service). Some faculty are “experts” in one axis and can mentor you in whatever area you may need more support. Other faculty have used a holistic approach to their careers and may be able to mentor you when you have broader questions.

• *Professional and personal:* Questions of how I “do” this versus who I “am” (or who I am “becoming”) in this process often require different conversations and perspectives.

One person cannot answer or help you navigate all the questions and needs that you have. From the beginning—but definitely in the years preceding your final promotion and tenure review—search for a team of mentors who can help you at different stages, for different things, and with different levels of trust. For example, when you have questions about identity or “costs” of an academic career, you may not be able to talk to someone in your program or institution. Or if you have questions about leveraging institutional resources or course evaluations, then you may want to talk to someone in your institution.

This is by no means an exhaustive list and these roles do not exist in isolation from each other. It is offered to help you think about the variety of mentors you can look for to help you go through this process in a healthy and meaningful way. Lastly, it is absolutely essential that you understand your department’s expectations and communicate those to all your mentors so that they can better listen, question, and advise. Departments within the same college can have widely different tenure norms (e.g., Educational Psychology vs. Educational Leadership). Pay attention, too, to the norms at the college and university level, because the final tenure decisions are made by administrators with their own set of expectations.

One final consideration when thinking about what makes this final step “different” from other reviews: That is the importance of making sense of your journey to date. Perhaps one of the most important—and little discussed—elements of the tenure process is how to tell your “scholar story”—your personal/professional statement, which is among the first items in your tenure file and is included in the material sent to external reviewers. How have you gotten to this point in your academic career? And, ultimately, what kind of scholar do you want to be (see who your mentors are)? This is the connective tissue of your portfolio. It must offer a coherent framework for the readers and the committee as a whole (more on this in the next section). This story can take many forms yet must reflect who you are as a scholar. To do this well requires time for reflection, organizing (and reorganizing), receiving feedback, and updating your story and dossier so that your story and evidence align. This is different than the time needed to collect and upload your documents, to create a system to retrieve these efficiently when you need them, or to compare your statements to those of others in and out of your department. These steps are important, no doubt, but we are talking about a level of meta-analysis that requires consistent
work over time and before the last-minute panic sets in. Give yourself the gift to think about and write your scholar story or professional/personal statement. In the end, it may be the most important thing you do.

Evidence of Productivity and Contributions

**What makes for a good professional/personal statement?** One of the most critical, but often difficult, documents you will produce for your tenure/promotion review file is the professional/personal statement. Keep in mind this may not be an expected or required component at your institution, but you should write one no matter what. Although the statement certainly should not contradict your curriculum vita (CV), it provides a very different record and has a different use in the review. The professional/personal statement provides a coherent and integrated story of what you have done. Think of this as a story—a narrative of what you have done; why this is important to you; why this is important to the field; how your accomplishments fit together; and what impact your teaching, research, and service have on the field of educational leadership. We suggest five things to keep in mind in developing your story.

1. Clarify the nature and importance of educational leadership and policy. Remember not everyone who reads your story will be familiar with how leadership or policy impacts educational practice. Grounding your story in the larger context of what leadership or policy means and how it contributes to student learning, education reform, school improvement, or social justice is critical. This type of clarification is particularly important in departments that combine disciplines. Increasingly educational leadership faculty reside in departments made up of a variety of disciplines, some closely related to educational leadership and policy and some with very different research foci and standards. Faculty from these other disciplines may need for your story to identify the nature and importance of educational leadership and policy.

2. Your story needs to use language that is free of jargon and clear to readers who are not typically accustomed to educational leadership research, teaching, and service. Also, be sure to use the terms found in the university guidelines. This demonstrates you are not only familiar with the guidelines but also have told your tenure/promotion story in ways that a reviewer can easily assess your contributions in light of the university’s criteria.

3. Provide specific and clear descriptions of what you have accomplished. For example, in some instances you will want to provide a numerical record of your publications. But you also should describe how your major publications fit with your story—your research agenda, record of impact, and your goals. A clear description of how the pieces of your story fit together demonstrates that your past products and future plans are not just exceptions but are integrated with the story of your work.

4. Your story needs to connect what you have done with what you plan to do. Remember that the primary tenure decision that your faculty colleagues make is to determine whether you will continue to be a productive researcher, teacher, and contributor to service. Many faculty will assume that past performance is the best or only predictor of future performance. Thus, connecting your activities to your future goals demonstrates that what you have already accomplished is not the end of the story.

5. Your story needs to demonstrate and document the impact of your teaching, research, and service. Although some university faculty remain focused on numerical indicators of
research impact, for example, citation numbers, impact indices (such as journal impact factors and author h-indexes), and course evaluation ratings, increasingly universities care about the impact of teaching and services and are open to more qualitative indicators. You will need to talk with your mentor(s) about what types of impact indicators are considered valuable at your university. Even if numerical indicators are the standard, it is important to demonstrate in clear and persuasive terms how your research, teaching, and service impact the field of inquiry, the preparation of educational leaders, and the broader contributions of university and professional service.

Who are “good” external reviewers? Before moving to a description of the nature and evidence for your teaching, research, and service story, it is useful to discuss the role and selection of external reviewers. Most universities use reviewers outside the university to evaluate candidates, especially their research record and its impact. This provides a way to legitimize the tenure/promotion review as not only a valid internal process but also an assessment based on norms and criteria from the larger field of educational leadership.

Universities vary regarding the role they allow you to play in selecting reviewers. Some universities ask for two separate lists of potential reviewers from you and from your department chair. In this case, the department or school may choose some from both lists. Other universities allow you to contact scholars to determine their willingness to be a reviewer. Usually only some of these are selected and contacted by the department or school administration. In other settings, you may have no input on the list of potential reviewers. In this case, our suggestions for selecting “good” reviewers do not apply to you. Contact your mentor(s) and department chair to discover the process used in your university.

The following suggestions relate primarily to external reviewers asked to assess your research record:

1. External reviewers should have a similar research focus to yours. That doesn’t mean they must have exactly the same research agenda, but they should be familiar with the literature, major questions, and debates in your field.

2. External reviewers should have expertise or at least familiarity with the methodological approach you use. If you primarily use hierarchical linear modeling in your research, choosing an external reviewer who is only familiar with discourse analysis would not provide the kind of methodological expertise necessary for reviewing your work.

3. External reviewers will have more credibility to the internal university reviewers if they are independent or what some refer to as being “at arm’s length.” That means external reviewers should not be dissertation committee members or chair or publication coauthors.

4. Most universities desire external reviewers who are at least tenured. In some universities, you will find that primarily full professors are selected.

5. Another major factor at many universities is the quality and status of the external reviewer’s institution. These include characteristics such as national rankings, peer institutions, and others. Tenure reviews, particularly at the dean and provost level, will care about the status of the reviewer’s university.
Finally, your mentor can be helpful to you in suggesting not only scholars who meet these criteria, but also potential reviewers with a reputation for being fair and consistent. What you send to the external reviewers as the basis for their assessment is critical. Typically, your university’s guidelines will require such documents as your personal/professional statement, your CV, and four to five scholarly products. Our suggestion is that you carefully select the scholarly products that (a) best represent your expertise and your methodological rigor; (b) are published in leading journals; and (c) demonstrate your original contributions, thus, sole or lead author publications.

**What is your teaching story?** In the next three sections, we outline suggestions for making your teaching, research, and service stories clear and persuasive. Your teaching story needs to describe not only what you’ve taught at the university but also your development as a teacher. It is not unusual for new, untenured faculty to experience teaching difficulties in the beginning of their careers. Tenure and promotion committees can be forgiving of early failures, if your teaching story demonstrates your development as a teacher—your evolving philosophy, andragogy, and effectiveness.

We suggest the following elements of your teaching story that can provide a developmental narrative of your teaching:

1. What have you taught? (specific courses)
2. How have you taught? (variety of pedagogical tools and innovations; philosophical assumptions)
3. What teaching delivery modes have you used? (face-to-face, online, hybrid, etc.)
4. Who have you taught? (undergraduates/graduates)
5. What is the assessment of your teaching? (student evaluations—both numerical indices and student quotations, peer observations, assessments of learning outcomes of your students)
6. What other teaching products have you developed? (curriculum, teaching cases, simulations, pedagogical publications and presentations)
7. What have you done to improve your teaching and why or how? (professional development)

Again, pay close attention to the criteria related to teaching that your university identifies and values. Your mentor can be helpful in identifying those perhaps unspoken or informal norms regarding teaching. If you have experienced low student evaluations in some early classes, your mentor also can help you tell your story by acknowledging these and what you did to improve.

Some faculty may teach controversial courses related to race, gender, sexual orientation, or social justice. It is not uncommon for students to struggle with these topics, especially if it is their first encounter with them. Colleagues have reported that these courses often receive lower evaluations than the more traditional leadership courses that the same faculty may teach. If this is your experience, your teaching story needs to acknowledge these reactions, demonstrate what you have done to engage students, and provide a variety of other evidence (e.g., peer
observations) that broaden the assessment of the impact of your teaching. Similarly, instructors of research methods courses may receive lower ratings because the content is challenging or of limited interest to some students.

Your teaching story needs to provide documentation of your impact or effectiveness as a teacher. This can be difficult due to the sometimes-invisible nature of teaching effectiveness. But we suggest at least five types of evidence you can provide:

1. syllabi with commentary;
2. student products with notes;
3. feedback provided to students;
4. students’ reflections, feedback, and course evaluations; and
5. peer observations and assessments.

**What is your research story?** The first thing your research story needs to provide is a description of your research agenda that is clear, coherent, and connected. The suggestions made earlier about the professional/personal statement still apply when you are describing your research agenda. That is, it needs to be clear to non-educational-leadership audiences as well as to experts. Focusing the agenda is particularly important. This does not mean you necessarily must have only one research focus that never changes. However, too many topics in your research agenda suggest that you are not targeting your scholarship in ways that allow you to make a serious contribution to the field. Too many foci also make it difficult to tell your story because there are no ties to integrate the products. Your research story, like your teaching story, can include descriptions of how your research agenda has evolved over time.

Emphasizing the importance of a focused research agenda does not mean that you should ignore or reject the serendipity that frequently occurs in academia. Opportunities to contribute a chapter to an edited book or special issue journal may demonstrate your evolving visibility in the field. You will need, however, to tell your research story by integrating these kinds of publications in the narrative.

Your research story also needs to relate your agenda to the larger knowledge base. How does your work build on, disrupt, or create a parallel knowledge base? This part of the story helps you identify and document your contributions to the larger field. How do your past and current research products fit this agenda? How do your future plans fit the agenda? Reviewers will want to know the relevance of your research for theory, practice, and policy.

In addition to telling your research story by clearly and coherently describing your research agenda, you will need to describe the types of scholarship you have produced. Currently, there are debates in educational leadership, as well as other fields, over what types of scholarship should be valued. Typically, peer-reviewed articles or other publications carry more weight than non-peer-reviewed. (Please note that due to the broad circulation of some non-peer-reviewed publications, one might argue that the resultant impact counterbalances the absence of the peer-review standard.) In addition, greater attention is being paid to public scholarship venues such as policy briefs, expert opinion articles in *Education Week*, court and governmental committee testimonies, blogs, tweets, and open-sourced journals. Universities and departments vary
regarding the value placed on these nontraditional venues, and internal reviewers who come from non-educational-leadership fields may be less impressed. Check with your mentor(s) and department chair regarding how these are counted and how you should discuss them in your research story. Again, your professional statement is critical for positioning these nontraditional as well as traditional publications. Be sure your story is clear and integrates these publications with your overall research agenda.

Although there are several acceptable ways to organize your research story (e.g., chronologically, conceptually, or by research topic), be sure to follow those guidelines and criteria provided by the university, and when possible use the terms in the university guidelines to specify criteria for evaluating your research story. Some universities do not provide the specific criteria, and you will need to ask your mentor(s) and department chair if informal criteria exist. Other universities are explicit about the criteria; for example, our school identifies the following four criteria: *methodological originality, substantive illumination, integration and synthesis, and conceptual and theoretical innovation.*

To document how your research story meets the criteria and demonstrates the impact of your research on the field, you will need to use a variety of evidence. Your research story should include both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Quantitative evidence can be used such as citation indices, circulation rates, and acceptance rates as well as newer indicators such as number of followers or downloads on electronic research access sites. Many university libraries offer resources on citation analysis specifically for faculty seeking promotion and tenure. Comments from other scholars and practitioners regarding the impact of your work on their research and practice also should be included. These comments provide evidence of your national or international visibility, which is usually considered in making tenure/promotion decisions.

Two other issues arise in some educational leadership and policy tenure/promotion cases: interdisciplinarity and collaboration. There is a growing recognition that many educational problems are solvable only by using interdisciplinary perspectives. Increasingly, educational leadership and policy scholars are turning to colleagues in the humanities, social sciences, business, and policy to form research collaboratives. If this is critical to your research story, be sure to describe its nature and potential contribution in your professional/personal statement. Whereas many researchers outside educational leadership and policy value interdisciplinary research, others are less familiar with the nature, methodologies, and importance of the field.

Collaboration, either in interdisciplinary contexts or with educational leadership colleagues, has become common and can be valuable to the growth of our field. In telling your research story, you need to discuss how the collaboration benefits your work. You also will need to identify your unique contribution to publications. Universities may ask for letters from coauthors describing and attesting to your contribution on specific publications. Even if the university does not ask for this documentation, you may want to provide a document that describes your contribution, such as percentage of publication and types of contribution (conceptual, methodological, etc.).
Some universities consider grant activity and productivity as part of scholarship. Even if it is not, you should take advantage of documenting any activity (applying for grants) or productivity (awarded) and more importantly how that fits with your scholarship.

What is your service story? Departments and universities vary in terms of the value review committees place on service. This recognition of the value of service and how it is integrated with your research and teaching is a critical part of your service story.

Typically, universities consider service in at least three areas: university (including program, department, school/college, campus), professional (including professional associations and editorial service), and community (especially where contributing your professional expertise). All three need to be part of your service story. Engaging in public or community service is becoming more valued due to the increasing importance of public scholarship, in which colleges and universities are seen as contributing to the solution of societal problems and the need for academia to demonstrate its value to the public. Nevertheless, what counts and is valued as community engagement varies by university and department; thus, it is critical that you talk with your mentor(s) and department chair about this important area and how to position your service contributions in your story. Although the expectations for service for assistant professors being reviewed for tenure and promotion vary by university and department, typically internal reviewers expect less service of assistant professors than what is expected of associate or full professors. This can mean several things. For example, in some settings, faculty being reviewed for tenure/promotion are expected to do some program and department service but very little campus service. Typically, these faculty are expected to demonstrate that they are beginning to develop national visibility not only through their research but also through service to professional associations and editorial responsibilities, such as reviewing publications for journals. Again, be sure to discuss with your mentor(s) and department chair the norms for service for someone at your career stage and reflect in your service story how your service contributions meet the criteria.

Similar to research and teaching, your service story should demonstrate not only the variety of service you provide but also the impact of that service. Evidence of service impact can include letters from colleagues (university and professional) and community members thanking you for your service and specifically acknowledging and valuing your unique contributions. Other evidence can include, for example, newspaper stories or professional association newsletters that highlight your contributions.

Scholars of color have a unique experience regarding service due to the tendency of many institutions to disproportionately tap them for academic service responsibilities, especially those involving “diversity service.” We are certainly not encouraging you to avoid all service opportunities. However, we do encourage you to work closely with your mentor(s) to be selective about your service agreements. Your mentor(s) can help you choose service opportunities that provide national visibility; connect with your research and teaching foci; are valued by colleagues; and provide opportunities to enrich your experiences at university, professional, and community levels. Frequently these service responsibilities provide a launching pad for your future career, such as movement into university administration and selection to professional association offices. Your service story needs to reflect how service fits with your other responsibilities, your philosophy, and the impact of your work.
Another important service consideration especially for young scholars of color is the value of mentoring graduate students of color. “Diversity service” such as this type of mentoring is critical to supporting these students. However, the time requirements can be significant if you are expected to carry this weight alone. Be sure to talk with your mentor(s) about ways to balance mentoring students with your own mentoring needs. These strategies can include setting boundaries (time, meeting frequency, etc.) or developing group arrangements that may reduce the time requirements of individual meetings. Be sure your service story demonstrates your mentoring activities with students and how this is integrated with your research and teaching.

All three areas of teaching, research, and service are important, but you at least have to be “good” in the first two in most universities. One is seldom denied tenure for failing to meet service obligations alone. This is noted not to encourage sliding on service responsibilities, but to underscore the premium placed on scholarship and teaching.

**Finalizing Tenure/Promotion Portfolio and Documentation**

You have spent the last 3 or 4 years putting your ducks in a row. You revved up your publications, became a skilled teacher, and have been involved in meaningful service that has given you local and national visibility. You are exhausted but proud of what you have accomplished. Now comes the last hurdle before your “life” goes out of your hands. It’s time to put “The Box” together …

“The Box” is an artifact of your time as a scholar and should be treated as more than the final check on your to-do list. Out of respect for you and all your hard work, do not leave this to the last minute. Increasingly, universities are using electronic versions of The Box. Your department chair or dean’s office can help you navigate this process.

Most institutions have guidelines for how to organize your materials. For example, the organization can include

- *Table of Contents:* A map of your materials;
- *Professional Statement:* Coherent framework of your identity as a scholar;
- *Teaching and Supporting Evidence;*
- *Research and Supporting Evidence (including grants);*
- *Service and Supporting Evidence;* and
- *Other Supporting Documents:* Materials that are not required but inform your experience as a scholar.

All of these have been discussed previously as independent threads. The Box allows you to weave these threads together and see the design of what you have woven over time. This is when you see whether your statement and documents align, whether who you are is who you meant to become and, ultimately, who you want to be.

As much as we talk about this process as an evaluation of your practice and a test of endurance, it should be, at its core, a moment of deep, personal learning. To help make that happen, it is
useful to write an “Epilogue”—whether or not you actually submit it as an addendum to your box. Ask yourself,

- Does this represent you with integrity? If not, how do you make sure it does?
- What have you left out about your story (no matter how small)? If yes, why did you leave it out? And could you weave it in?
- Do you “feel good” about this representation of your work?
- Are you proud of this representation of your work?
- How does this meet institutional guidelines?

The second question is an important one, especially for scholars of color or other marginalized groups. As scholars of color, we often leave out parts of our story because we think they are not “academic enough” (e.g., work done with local communities or in the area of advocacy, which is too often framed as “service”) or because we have been trained to think that that part of our identity has no place in academia (unless it is in a publication). Yet, for many of us, that work—whether we call it scholarship or service—is an integral part of who we are as academics. Rather than compartmentalize your work or identity, find ways to make that part of the conceptualization of your work, either as a final reflection or as a lens to edit your professional narrative. Give yourself time to do this.

One other important question that is vital NOT to overlook: Have you edited all your work for spelling and grammar?

Make sure that you also share your portfolio—or pieces of it—with your mentors. They can offer you critical and supportive feedback given their own experience going through the process and as external reviewers for other promotion and tenure cases. It is also important that you share institutional guidelines with them so that they can give you their perspective on how your portfolio meets those guidelines.

Lastly, you need to be prepared with a plan once you have submitted your Box. Some will tell you to have a contingency plan, “just in case,” and others will tell you to start developing a plan for achieving the rank of full professor (see Section 6 of this publication). What we are suggesting is slightly different … What is your plan to CELEBRATE?? Once The Box is out of your hands, there is little you can do. Yet, there is a lot you have already done, and that needs to be celebrated. Go out with friends, have a family getaway for a few days, get a massage, ask your partner out on a date (remember they have lived this experience with you), use your Groupon for that wine tasting class you have been meaning to try, go on a hike … whatever you need to do to mark this important step in your career. Regardless of the outcome, congratulations!
Section 4: Managing Uncertainty: Strategies Before, During, and After the Tenure Review

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The tenure and promotion review period is understandably (and in most cases unavoidably) stressful. For institutions as well as individuals, this is the “make or break” point that comes at an early and critical juncture of an academic career. Similar to those times when you navigated the completion of your doctoral degree, or handled the search process that led to landing your academic position, you will discover strategies that can help you identify which parts of the process are under your control. Little is magical about putting together a dossier, but careful preparation, good information gathering, and a thoughtful approach may reduce stress. It is equally important to realize that, in addition to working carefully on the part of the process you can influence, much of your task will be managing the uncertainty inherent in the review process as gracefully as you can.

Get the Best Information You Can About What Happens in Your Institution

Tenure and promotion reviews share similarities across institutions, but parts of the process vary, and some may even be unique to your college or university. Understanding how the process works in general is helpful, but you will want to take the time to understand how it works specifically in the institution where you will submit your dossier.

First and foremost, be sure you understand the timing of the process from beginning to end. When (i.e., during what year of your appointment) are you reviewed? During the year of your review, when will you be expected to have a vita and materials for external reviewers ready to be sent out? When do the points of institutional decision making take place? What information will you be given at each step of the process? Are there “dark” periods during the review when the normal course of events means that you will hear nothing, perhaps for months? This “radio silence,” as my colleague Liz Hollingworth terms it, can be particularly stressful. Whereas some institutions have short, contractually specified timetables for notification, others may take as much as a year to complete the process and will provide little information en route to the final decision.

You also should be able to learn about the nature of information that will be provided to you along the way by reading institution policy, faculty handbooks, and talking to senior faculty. Although most universities have review steps at the department, school/division, university level, and the Board of Regents or Trustees level, the timing and significance of these steps can vary widely. In some institutions, candidates are told the actual vote count for committee decisions at every stage of the process. In others, only a general positive or negative outcome may be communicated. At other institutions, you may hear nothing at all and should assume that means that the case has advanced. Knowing what is the norm for your institution will help you adjust expectations.

Understanding and Taking Charge of Your Choices

External reviewers. You should also know what choices you are (or are not) empowered to make in the review process. For example, most institutions use some form of external review as critical evidence when making tenure and promotion decisions. Typically, this involves the
solicitation of multiple letters from scholars in your field who will evaluate the quality and impact of your scholarly work. Nevertheless, the ways in which those reviews are solicited can vary, and understanding the choices and norms in your university is important.

In some institutions, candidates are given the choice about whether or not the external reviews will be confidential or whether the candidate may see the letters submitted. If provided with that choice, you need to talk to other senior faculty and mentors about the pluses and minuses of each option. For faculty in educational leadership and policy, opportunities to network with more senior faculty through the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) or the American Educational Research Association (AERA) can provide valuable guidance from seasoned colleagues from other institutions. There is no right answer, but it is important to know whether the norms of a given institution weigh a confidential review more heavily than an open letter.

Similarly, many universities have a process that allows candidates to provide names for at least some of the external reviewers. You should talk to senior faculty about the kinds of individuals you may want to include in that list. May you include a member of your dissertation committee? (Usually not, but check.) What about a senior faculty member with whom you have coauthored? Is it a good idea to have references from the world of practice, or are academics only preferred? If you have been part of large collaborative projects, is it possible to solicit a letter from someone who worked on the same project but with whom you did not work closely? What kinds of institutions are seen as peers for the place where you are employed? If you submit a name for someone at an institution where the work is very different from where you are (a colleague in a community college, for example, when you work at a Research I university), will the committee see that review as relevant? The chair or senior faculty member who is managing the review is likely to be able to provide clear answers to questions such as these based on their institutional experience. You also may find guidelines in the tenure process that spell out the preferred qualifications for external reviewers, including whether it is required or preferred that they come from universities that are the same Carnegie classification as your own or if they must be part of a particular peer group (such as the Association of American Universities).

**Back to uncertainty.** Institutions vary with respect to the amount of information that is provided to the candidate about the letters solicited. In general, you should expect that you will be told neither who wrote letters about you nor the contents of the letters solicited at any point in the process. With few exceptions (such as that cited above), most reviews are provided under the strictest rules of confidentiality, and even after the process is concluded, institutional rules usually prevent a candidate from seeing the letters. This is perhaps one of the most uncomfortable parts of the tenure process, but one that is widely respected across universities. Do not expect your mentors and friends in the department or school to breach their promise to keep the process confidential; you may even find that it is easier not to participate in a conversation with a colleague who is tempted to do so.

**Getting your Materials in Shape**

Actively seeking information about the process before you undergo review will not only help you prepare, but also may reduce stress by providing information about what the normal procedure looks like at your institution. Talking with mentors and friends at your institution as
well as others can enhance your perspective as well. Ideally, you will have received feedback about your work in the years leading up to this point. In preparing your materials, you can address or provide insight into any questions or concerns that have been articulated along the way.

In many institutions, you have an opportunity to provide a statement that accompanies the materials sent to your external reviews and/or provided to the committee. You also may be asked to select a subset of publications for the external review. Use the opportunity to provide context for your work wisely. In the best of these short statements, the candidate provides a story that demonstrates growth as a scholar, especially beyond dissertation work. The candidate can illustrate not only accomplishment, but also the trajectory for future work. Assessing that trajectory—what the candidate is likely to accomplish in the future—is a critical factor in making judgments about whether or not to tenure a faculty member. The best predictor for what you will do is what you have done already. Use your own vita to make your best case.

Most institutions (but not all) use electronic media to disseminate materials to reviewers and committee members. Get clear about what you are supposed to prepare and how it is to be delivered. Some institutions provide clerical assistance for the process, but many do not. In all cases, it is your responsibility alone to ensure the materials are complete, legible, and well organized.

Finally, understand that the route of a given case, even when the outcome is positive, may encounter some bumps. When familiarizing yourself with your local procedures, you also should become familiar with what happens should a negative outcome occur at any point in the process. In some colleges, every case progresses through all stages or levels of review—for example, from department to school/division to university to Board of Trustees, regardless of whether the case has a positive assessment by any of these committees (see Figure). In others, advancement to the next level requires a positive vote by the preceding committee. In the case of the latter event, know what the institutional process is for appealing a decision and what kind of evidence is (or is not) needed to advance your case. Many cases have positive outcomes that were appealed at an earlier point in the process.

*Figure.* Prototype of sequential stages of tenure and promotion reviews.
That Which Shall Not Be Named: Managing a Negative Outcome

While we’ll close this section with some thoughts about how newly tenured and promoted faculty may choose to behave going forward, it may be helpful to spend a few moments reflecting on what options are available to those for whom the process does not have a positive outcome.

Tenure and promotion decisions always will have a subjective dimension to them, and despite efforts (such as this Guidebook) to demystify the process, it is still true that key parts of the process will remain confidential and nontransparent to the candidate being reviewed. That uncertainty and obliqueness extends to the communication of the decision itself. When positive, the candidate rarely gets an assessment that indicates clearly what went right (or what could have gone wrong). When negative, the candidate almost never hears why the decision was made and is most often left with only a summative, as opposed to a formative, evaluation of the work. This can add to the frustration or confusion that can accompany a negative decision.

It is probably wise to recognize that dealing with the many emotions that are engendered by this decision will need time and space in order for the candidate to achieve even a measure of resolution or acceptance. While some decisions can and should wait, others may need to be made on a relatively short time frame.

For example, in the event of a negative decision, it is usually up to the candidate to decide whether to invoke the appeals process at the campus level. Most often, a candidate must start that process by a deadline specified. In most cases, there is no downside to appealing by taking advantage of the processes available in your own institution. However, if a candidate consults professional legal representation (should that be allowed in institutional appeals), the candidate’s responsibility is to pay fees incurred. Faculty who are members of collective bargaining agreements also will have access to grievance processes in which they may be advised or represented by a member of their collective bargaining unit at no additional costs.

Understand, however, that virtually all appeals focus on the procedural elements of the decision and not the substantive decision itself. Candidates may have the opportunity in the local process to provide additional material and may solicit or include recommendations from other parties. If the process was flawed or followed incorrectly, the appeals board usually has options to provide a remedy, including invoking an additional level of review, asking that a committee vote be retaken, or even reversing the decision. If the appeal is in the hands of one individual—that person also may seek additional information or reviews. But absent gross evidence of discrimination or a similarly egregious offence, few appeals boards will overrule a decision that has been made on adequate procedural grounds, especially if the external reviewers or the local committee do not offer sound consensus that the candidate should be tenured or promoted.

Once the local appeal has been exhausted, a candidate facing an unfavorable outcome may choose to pursue further legal action. The grounds on which such actions may be pursued, and the likelihood of success, are topics that are best discussed with professional legal representation. Suffice it to say, only the candidate can decide how much energy and resources he or she is willing to devote to this process. Candidates should know that processes tend to be lengthy, often extending years. Even candidates who achieve a positive outcome in the courts often have
a period of at least 1 or 2 years (sometimes more), during which their status with the university is terminated pending the outcome of the decision.

What is true for all candidates facing a negative outcome is that they will need (when they are ready) to develop a strategy for the next steps in their career. Usually, candidates have at least one academic year before their employment is terminated, which means that they have a reasonable period to explore the job market.

Candidates finding themselves in this position are wise to actively seek advice from friends, mentors, and senior colleagues who are outside their institution. These individuals will have no investment in defending or explaining the negative decision, and their only interest will be in helping you figure out your next steps. They will understand that in addition to scholarly ambitions, you will be balancing real concerns about family support and finances. Their networks and experience can be invaluable at this time, and you are likely to hear about other individuals who shared your circumstance but ultimately had a rich and rewarding career.

It also may be a good time to think about one’s “fit” with the type of institution in which one desires tenure. After a few years, assistant professors may discover they prefer engaging in teaching or research in a way that is different from the opportunities provided in their initial institution. Working in higher education affords faculty many opportunities, and colleges vary in terms of their missions, their values, and the types of students enrolled. Forced or not, this can be an opportunity to refit oneself to an institution that more clearly matches one’s ideals and preferences.

Often candidates who want to return to a research-intensive institution make a move that places them at the heart of the kind of scholarship they know, but in a nonteaching capacity. Even a temporary position with a research project or institute, or an administrative role in a research-intensive institution, puts you close to the networks and contacts that will make you aware of all of the opportunities in your field. It also may provide the opportunity to continue to write and research and to enhance your profile with additional publications and experience.

You will find senior colleagues will see your situation as far from unique, and they may have interesting and imaginative ideas for pathways that may take you back to a research institution (if that is what you desire.)

Congratulations: You’ve Made it!

Far more likely, you will be thinking about what to do next now that you have achieved the major accomplishment of earning tenure and promotion at your university. This is now officially your house, and they have made you a permanent member of the club. What next?

If you have not started already, start to build and improve the house you live in. What you will realize very quickly is that some of the protections from service you got as an assistant professor were actually the product of efforts by more senior colleagues who spared you from some tasks. Now it is your turn to be thoughtful about where you want to contribute and what kind of influence you want to have.
One of the first things you likely will be asked to do is to share your (successful) story of tenure with those colleagues who are still on the way. This is a role you likely will be asked to repeat many times. So take the opportunity to learn as much about the process as you are able, especially so that you can mentor and move others ahead. Read and study the letters you now will see as a voting member of a tenure committee, and listen to how others evaluate them. When given the chance to participate in a review of a junior colleague at another institution, take it when you can. You will learn first-hand how putting together a good set of materials helps a reviewer tell a story. Be open to the varieties of success stories you encounter. You have one, but it may not be the only (or even the most common) one. All of this is likely to advantage you when you decide to submit to a review for the next promotion yourself.

Tenure is often at the end ahead of a long and focused road that started in graduate school and continued for 6 or 7 years beyond that. Take this opportunity to take a breath and think broadly about what you really want to do. A sabbatical should be as much to figure out your next act as to complete production on current work. What questions do you want to explore? What skills or areas of knowledge do you feel you need to become familiar with? What interdisciplinary possibilities exist among your colleagues internally and externally that promise intriguing results in the future?

Finally, take a little time to be grateful and to tell others who have helped you how they have contributed to your success. Graduate advisors love getting the call that a former student has achieved tenure. If someone has provided advice or assistance along the way that helped you, let that person know. And celebrate—you have earned it.
Section 5: Life After Tenure—Preparation for Promotion to the Rank of Professor

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Following the successful achievement of tenure and promotion to associate professor, many faculty members experience a sense of letdown and frustration. Studies report faculty at the associate professor rank are the least satisfied for a variety of reasons (“Dissatisfaction,” 2017; Jaschik, 2012). For instance, many of the time protections placed on assistant professors (reduced committee assignments, limited teaching schedule) are lifted once being promoted, resulting in additional teaching and service responsibilities. Because these responsibilities demand more time, faculty cannot devote as much attention to research and scholarship, which in many instances is what they will be rewarded for when seeking promotion to professor rank.

Furthermore, the criteria for achieving the professor rank can be vague and ambiguous, leaving associate professors confused as how best to develop and expand their teaching, research, and service records worthy of promotion. In some cases, associate professors do not receive formal feedback on their progress towards promotion (“Dissatisfaction,” 2017). Complications related to gender also can arise since females, especially women of color, take longer to achieve full professor promotion than their male counterparts (Jaschik, 2012; Turner & Myers, 2000). Although some universities we are familiar with are striving to provide alternative paths to achieving professor status besides outstanding scholarship, like securing external grant funding, often the expectations for demonstrating exemplary teaching and/or service records are not well defined. For instance, faculty handbooks may indicate promotion to professor is based on a faculty member’s specific assigned responsibilities, position description, and/or distribution of effort.

In this section, we outline a set of choices that are dependent upon the context of your institution. We will speak to the increased or new expectations you face as you proceed through the stages of the professoriate. Keep in mind that the balanced portfolio that enabled you to be promoted and tenured is a continuing expectation for most tenure and promotion committees. We believe there is more leeway when moving from associate to full professor to maintain or deepen an existing area of expertise or to select a new arena of interest. Remember, however, be it a new course, new research, or a new service project, the merit and worth of the endeavor will be evaluated against peer perceptions internally and externally by similar criteria that were used in your previous review. Like promotion and gaining tenure, the process is best understood locally through a mentor you select from your institution who knows the norms and mores of your institution of higher education. This person will be aware of changing institutional expectations: Is it becoming more important for associate professors to bring federal or state grants to the institution? Are they expected to collaborate with a local school district or charter school enterprise?

Increased or New Expectations for the Professor Rank

Teaching. When advancing from associate to full professor, our belief is that generating new courses or significantly revising courses based on changing professional theories of action or new state regulations is a good investment in securing your future in this area of evaluation.
Taking on a doctoral or master’s degree cohort that increases enrollment may be of particular interest to your department as recruitment and acceptance into your programs ebb and flow. Furthermore, you can volunteer to team-teach courses with colleagues, assist novice faculty in developing course materials and assignments, develop new courses or new preparation programs, and offer workshops on effective classroom pedagogy. By taking a proactive approach to improving your teaching, impacting colleagues’ instructional strategies, and improving course offerings or programs, you are demonstrating a willingness to broaden the scope of influence beyond your individual classroom setting.

Further, one is expected to continue to demonstrate strong teaching and advising. The challenge here is to meet or surpass the average department and school or college student assessments of your teaching, although it is worth noting that the Lake Wobegone effect fits here, where everyone is expected to be “above average,” which is mathematically impossible. An additional dynamic that we have found troubling in the universities we are familiar with were faculty members who only obtained high ratings from doctoral courses and fell below the departmental averages while teaching master’s level courses. It has occurred in the six universities where we have taught and led programs in educational leadership and policy studies. Our sense is that because many master’s degree students desire practical application of course concepts, some faculty struggle to blend theory and practice. Doctoral students, on the other hand, are much more likely to want to learn about and conduct research, which appeals to many associate professors’ goals and interests.

**Research.** Now that you have achieved tenure, you might be tempted to write that book you always wanted to publish. However, in educational leadership and policy studies (unlike disciplines such as history where book publication is encouraged), faculty need to continue publishing in premier peer-reviewed journals with low acceptance rates (e.g., *American Educational Research Journal, Educational Administration Quarterly, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, Journal of Educational Administration, Journal of School Leadership*). Depending upon your institution, one or two articles a year is usually sufficient to reach your full professor goal from the associate level. Your scholarship needs to address critical areas of need and interest in the field. Turning teaching and service grants into a research project moves them from an instructional or service activity into your research portfolio.

Many assistant professors are encouraged to publish as much and as often as possible, but our advice is to focus your interests on critical strands or themes (i.e., “lines of inquiry”). Talking with others in your department and college about the particular publications that are highly valued is critical. Questions you might pose include the following: Who are the top 10 scholars in your areas of specialization or interest, and will you be one of them in the next 7 years? How can you promote your thinking and scholarship that allows you to become part of this august group?

Finally, you want to secure a reputation as a valuable source of scholarship and knowledge on public policy or research to practice. Therefore, the degree to which others are using your ideas is another measure of influence in the field. Citation rates and impact factors for the journals publishing your work provide this type of information. Additional evidence includes receiving research grants from external agencies, obtaining testimonials from faculty in other institutions who use your published work in the classes they teach, presenting invited papers or reports for
other institutions or organizations, and being invited to submit manuscripts for special issues of journals and edited books. In many institutions, building a national and international reputation for conducting and disseminating high-quality research is the hallmark of what is expected for achieving the rank of professor.

**Service.** Although faculty members seeking promotion to full professor rank may view their service commitments as being far less important than their teaching and research responsibilities, you should not shirk these important professional responsibilities. In this arena, service within the department, school, or college is always desirable, but still the least valued dimension of your service contribution. Now is the time to become a national figure in your professional associations by becoming an officer, overseeing the professional association’s research agenda, or serving as an editor or on the editorial board of your preferred professional journals. Your expertise also can be acknowledged by being invited to conduct site reviews for other institutions; serve on review panels for external grants; provide information to state legislators, superintendents, or professional associations; serve as an external examiner for doctoral student dissertations at other institutions; and serve as an external reviewer for faculty tenure or promotion cases at other universities. These activities not only demonstrate how your specific expertise is being recognized and impacting the field, but also add to the prestige of your institution.

We also believe professors must take on the role of building partnerships with school districts to assist one’s institution in recruiting new students and providing service to them. For example, we received a state competitive grant funded through federal dollars. Today, 3 years after the federal grant concluded, we are in our fourth cohort of 50 assistant principals from six counties, two more counties than the original four counties that began the program. Perseverance, as well as providing quality service, has led one of our institutions to sustain its leadership development into EdS and a new EdD program as well as expand its recruitment and programming in a series of teacher academies boosting needed enrollment in teacher education for local districts.

**Other (e.g., citizenship, leadership, advocacy, and activism).** Besides the types of leadership responsibilities noted above, you should strive to be a reliable and trustworthy colleague, one who is willing to provide guidance and support for others within and outside your institution. You can support colleagues by providing resources (e.g., instructional materials, research protocols), helping them publish research, and broadening their professional networks. These activities demonstrate your advocacy and support for others, especially colleagues who are seeking to advance in the field. You also can advocate for students by helping them find jobs, publish research, and expand their professional networks. By being a good citizen within and outside the department, expanding your leadership responsibilities, and advocating for issues of importance to public education, you are become a role model for others to emulate, a hallmark of the professorship.

**Preparing for and Developing Documentation for Promotion Review to Professor Rank**

Returning to the role of the local mentor is still the wise choice; because institutional requirements and expectations differ, always seek information about how the promotion process works in your context. Besides thoroughly reviewing your university’s documents and policies regarding promotion to professor, meet with faculty who have successfully achieved the
professor rank and with administrators and faculty who review promotion cases. This information is critical to clarifying procedures and expectations.

The goal of the dossier for promotion to professor is to communicate to the promotion committee why the institution should consider continuing to invest in you and the merit and worth of your future contributions to your program area, department, college, and university as well as its constituencies—students, families, public education, and the state, nation, or global educational interests. The dossier for promotion should begin with a statement of your (a) professional growth since being promoted and tenured and (b) professional goals for the next 5–7 years in teaching, research, and service. Writing the story of your career accomplishments in teaching, research, and service demonstrates how the themes of your balanced or singular approach are tied together and serve as a foundation or platform for the next phase of your career. For example, your statement might read: “Now that I have accomplished what I set out to do during my pretenure years, I intend to build upon X, Y, and Z as well as take on new areas, A and B. This phase of my career will focus on… Each of these initiatives is tied to my personal and professional goals that will enhance the prestige and perception of our college and university by…”

References


Section 6: Advice to Those Critical to the Tenure and Promotion Review Process

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The tenure and promotion aspect of faculty life in higher education is a serious and often stressful part of advancing a career in the academy. Much of the work of successfully preparing for and achieving tenure and promotion falls on the individual faculty member. However, we often forget that departmental colleagues and administrators at each level of the institution support and facilitate the process. In fact, this support can impact the ultimate success of the faculty member. Those who are in those roles must recognize and embrace the key values undergirding the promotion and tenure process. Those critical values are confidentiality, transparency, communication, and clarity of process and procedures.

Promotion to associate with tenure is driven by the tenure clock, the date set in the initial appointment letter for the tenure year. The tenure year denotes the university-required probationary period for new faculty hired as tenure track. Conversely, the process of promotion to full professor is initiated by the candidate.

With varying issues surrounding initial tenure and promotion to full professor, advice is provided first for involvement with candidates being promoted from assistant to associate with tenure both for the year-long process and the years prior to tenure year. The section on promotion to full professor is organized to provide advice for the actual year being considered for promotion as well as long-term support.

Promotion From Assistant to Associate With Tenure

Department level. At the department level during the promotion and tenure process, it is important for the department to communicate information to ensure candidates understand the process; timeline; requirements for dossier; and how they can receive help and guidance of the department chair, associate dean, and senior departmental colleagues. For example, using a faculty mentor would be helpful from the 1st year of a candidate’s hiring up through submission of tenure and promotion materials. This guidance is critical in preparing the dossier for tenure and promotion. It is helpful to provide candidates access to view the dossier of a recently promoted associate professor in the department. Also, clarify the process surrounding obtaining the outside reviewer letters and communicate, as far as confidentiality allows, the outcome.

At the department level, provide specific, clear feedback to candidates on accuracy, quality, format, and ease in reading the dossier. Plan to have the candidate’s dossier reviewed by a mentor or department member who is not part of external review process. Also, the process and guidelines should be reviewed with the departmental review committee to promote fair and unbiased reviews.

College level. At the college level, communication of timeline and feedback is important. Someone in the college dean’s office (often an associate dean) should be the point person for managing the process and should meet as early as possible prior to the tenure year process to explain the various steps. It is ideal to have an internal deadline at the college level for the dossier to be ready by end of the spring semester prior to the provost’s September deadline. Such an approach reduces any potential issues with securing external reviews during the summer.
The university and college guidelines on promotion and tenure should be very detailed and clear on both the format and the content of dossier. Provide a clear description of the timing of each review step and communicate those decisions at each level to candidates in a timely fashion. Such communication is important so that the candidate is kept informed as the process moves up the levels of review. Ultimately, the college dean reviews the feedback from all lower levels of review, and then writes her or his own letter based on the prior reviews and on her or his own independent review of the promotion/tenure documents.

**University level.** At the university level, clarity of instructions for submission is key. It is important to provide clear instructions on the process. The Provost’s Office should provide training sessions, clear online instructions, and in-person support with regard to the promotion and tenure technical submission site. The Provost’s Office also should provide training on how to compile and upload the electronic promotion and tenure file. The online system should be easy to use, easy to upload the documents, and clear regarding what information should be included in the dossier.

It is also important for universities to streamline the process for candidates. Many universities maintain a central repository for standard information such as teaching evaluations, publications, transmittal forms for grant submissions, and other information. Such a repository could interface directly with the promotion and tenure process so automated reports can be created and included in the promotion and tenure dossier. Another key consideration at this level of review involves ensuring that members of the university-wide promotion and tenure committee understand the standards for excellence for each discipline, field, and subfield. Typically, the department-level review serves to inform college-level and university-level reviewers about discipline-specific standards, norms, and expectations.

**Long-Term Support for Assistant to Associate With Tenure Candidates**

Often, tenure-track faculty do not realize that the probationary period is shorter than most understand. Thus, at the departmental level, it is important to clearly communicate expectations early. New tenure-track faculty should participate in multiple sessions to explain expectations and requirements for tenure. Special sessions focused on balancing research with teaching and service loads, especially for women and minority faculty candidates, could be beneficial due to reports that women and faculty from underrepresented ethnic groups tend to have heavier teaching loads and higher service demands (Turner & Myers, 2000). These responsibilities may result in lower research productivity. The tenure-track faculty should be provided guidance on progress towards tenure as part of the annual reviews as well as in the formal 3-year review. Department and other colleagues can provide helpful feedback regarding the expectations of tenure track faculty. The department chair should use annual formal feedback to communicate faculty progress. Holding a series of formal meetings tailored to where the candidate is in the promotion and tenure process would be helpful (e.g., 1st year, after the 3rd-year review, 5th year).

Mentoring in securing external research funding often is the biggest challenge for tenure-track faculty. Formal mentoring associated with writing and submitting research proposals is important. Mentoring also is important in helping tenure-track faculty succeed in publishing in top journals (e.g., *American Educational Research Journal, Educational Administration*).
Quarterly, American Psychologist, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis). Colleagues can provide support for publications by reading drafts and giving feedback. It is helpful to provide opportunities to junior faculty members to have a more active role in cowriting research proposals with senior faculty members at the university. There often is a steep learning curve in grant writing. Help faculty members strengthen their record of accomplishments by nominating or helping faculty self-nominate (depending on the award) for national awards such as the National Science Foundation Early CAREER award (Science Technology Engineering Math), the Division A Emerging Scholar Award from the American Educational Research Association, or the Jack Culbertson Award from the University Council for Educational Administration. Provide an opportunity for tenure-track faculty to coteach a class with a senior faculty member in the department to learn the ins and outs of teaching. Peer observations of teaching followed by detailed feedback are an additional activity that could support excellence in teaching and in demonstrating departmental teaching expectations.

At the dean level, consider multiple dimensions of support strategies including teaching load assignment (with the chair’s recommendation), research databases subscriptions, support for conference attendance, research symposium hosting, electronic data analysis software, and others. It is important to note that most universities have a tenure extension policy, and in some policy-approved circumstances it is in the faculty member’s best interest to request to “stop the tenure clock.” Decisions to request to the provost to apply the policy must be carefully thought out and the request based on institutional policy. At the university level, college and university-level teaching workshops can be very useful in enhancing teaching. Support from a university-level teaching center that provides one-to-one support in addition to general workshops would be beneficial to junior faculty members who are honing their teaching skills.

Promotion From Associate to Full Professor

At the department level during the promotion evaluation year, it is important to have timely communication. Provide clear information on the department and college process and timelines for full professor review by the department and college full professor review committee. The process should be carefully managed so that deadlines are met and the candidate has feedback in a timely manner along the process. When faced with the department/college having too few full professors to be able to properly review files at all levels, the strategy implemented should be made clear and transparent to the candidate, with all questions answered to eliminate additional anxiety.

Candidates should have a supportive departmental environment. The department chair should meet with faculty considering promotion to full professor at multiple points in the 2 years prior to submission, clearly outlining the expectations for going up for full professor and lending support throughout the preparation process. Some institutions require posttenure reviews every few years. Such consistent reviews are effective opportunities to offer faculty members important feedback as they set their goals on promotion to the rank of professor. Deans and chairs must be willing to answer questions and be open to discussion. Colleagues who recently went up for promotion to full professor are very helpful in preparation of the dossier of a candidate. Ensure that the promotion to full professor process within the department is smooth, friendly, cooperative, and professionally executed. At the college and university levels, the
Provost’s Office should provide clear and helpful information about the process for promotion to full professor.

**Long-Term Support for Associate Professor for Promotion to Full Professor**

It is critical to provide clear guidelines for promotion for full professor to potential candidates early so they can consider plans for achieving full professor status. In contrast to the probationary period for promotion from assistant to associate, there is no set time in rank for promotion from associate to full. A very accomplished associate professor may advance to full after 3–5 years in rank, but many take longer. It is not too early to begin discussions on promotion with faculty soon after initial tenure and promotion but at least 2 years prior to advancing the dossier for full professor. Department chairs and deans should provide resources or programming at the department or college levels to support faculty promotion to the rank of professor. This can include funding support for presentations at national conferences, service to national association editorial boards, national initiatives, and attendance at national and international workshops in discipline. It is helpful to discuss with associate professors the academic profiles of recently promoted faculty as encouragement to self-nominate for promotion to full professor. Inform associate professors about the significant benefits to being promoted. The department chair must assume a critical role in working with faculty member in the decision-making process to submit the dossier for promotion to full professor. Clarify the service expectation at the department and college level for full professors.

**Long-Term Support at the College and University Levels**

Senior colleagues and leadership should signal at the college level the interest in and expectation that a faculty member consider going up for full professor. Programming at the university level, such as midcareer workshops, can boost an associate professor’s interest in going up for promotion to the rank of professor. The implementation of interdisciplinary research groups composed of faculty members from across the university also can serve as a helpful tool regarding access to research grants and coauthored projects and publications. Strategic grant-writing centers located within colleges or in centralized university-based location also could promote grant-getting strategies for faculty members and could assist them from the preaward level to the postaward level.

**Special Note Related to External Reviewers**

External reviewers’ letters are a critical aspect of the process. When invited to be an external reviewer for faculty at other institutions, it is essential to commit the time to provide an in-depth, thorough, fair, and helpful review. In addition, clarify with those requesting review whether the letter will remain confidential to the candidate. In writing the review, remain responsive to the questions you as reviewer are requested to address. Most of all, respond on time to the review deadline. Failure to do so creates multiple problems for the submission of the dossier on time and creates frustration for both the department chair and the candidate. Further, it can negatively impact the reviewer’s reputation among colleagues.

When in the position of requesting external letters, provide clarity to the candidate regarding the process for gathering names, choosing reviewers, timeline, and other relevant factors. Failure to do so creates additional stress on the candidate. Ensure that the external reviewers are at arm’s
length from the candidate and provide clarity as to how that is defined by the university. Traditionally this means that the external reviewers do not have a direct relationship to the candidate, either as former dissertation chairperson or co-researchers and co-authors. Provide clear directions in the communication to external reviewers regarding expectations for the review and timeline. It also is important to provide sufficient and well-organized materials for the reviewer. If possible, provide a brief note of appreciation (from department chair or dean) to external reviewers at the conclusion of the entire tenure process. This not only demonstrates good will but also could serve to keep external reviewers interested in helping the department chair again in the future with forthcoming faculty reviews.

Above all, in the entire promotion and tenure process, show respect to the candidates by honoring confidentiality. Failure to do so comes at a cost: integrity of the entire process. Candidates who have reason to believe that confidentiality has been violated may use this as a means to challenge and appeal promotion and tenure decisions on procedural grounds.

Reference

Closing Comments

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We sincerely appreciate the contributions of the authors and reviewers of the *UCEA Guidebook on Retention, Tenure, and Promotion*. Their comments and insights are born of years of familiarity with and experience in academia, particularly in research and doctoral-granting university settings. The RTP standards and procedures they describe are largely typical of university RTP policies, and their observations and advice reflect understanding of normative RTP expectations and practices in academia. Collectively, the authors have addressed both the rational and the personal/emotional dynamics of RTP performance reviews.

Readers may wonder why the RTP review process is so thorough, exhaustive, and anxiety producing relative to performance reviews they may have experienced in other employment settings. There are probably several reasons for this difference.

First, awarding tenure to faculty is a strong employee (earned) benefit. Whereas the central rationale for tenure is considered to be faculty academic freedom, the fact is that for most faculty, tenure is an award of long-term job security (barring highly unlikely circumstances). Thus, if a benefit is far reaching, the standards and procedures to earn that benefit are expected to be rigorous.

Second, those new to academia probably have never experienced a peer-review evaluation system. The very fact that one’s peers (as well as the hierarchy of university administrative personnel) are responsible for evaluating one’s job performance introduces a new employment dynamic for most novice faculty. For some, peer review, as well as the professorial rank system, raises some discomfort or ambiguity about the nature of relationships among faculty—colleagues or superordinates? Peer support network or judicious evaluators? Further, as much as senior colleagues typically do their best to be fair and impartial in their assessment of a colleague’s work, individual reviewers may have their own internal “ruler” to measure another’s productivity and contributions. For example, some reviewers may value professorial records that are reasonably balanced across research, teaching, and service—with good to excellent productivity in each area. By contrast, some reviewers may put such a premium on research productivity that teaching and service contributions are given minimal weight or consideration. Others still may expect excellent teaching and service to students and are content with “satisfactory” research contributions. Thus, the candidate may find it difficult to predict exactly where one’s work will stand with the full array of internal and external reviewers.

Third, most who enter the professoriate have been highly successful in prior academic and employment pursuits. Yet, RTP performance expectations are sufficiently challenging to novice faculty that they may experience the fear of failure for the first time in their lives. This fear can be either paralyzing or motivating, depending on one’s response to it. Close colleagues and friends can help faculty deal with such fear if it arises.

In closing, let us say that most educational leadership faculty who enter academia have long and successful careers in academia. Even if one is not awarded tenure or promotion in one university
context, that circumstance may only serve as an opportunity to find a better institutional fit for oneself elsewhere. Additionally, the RTP process itself is an important opportunity for self-reflection on one’s work priorities and future professional direction. We hope that the *UCEA Guidebook* is a valuable resource for those pursuing RTP, as well as for those serving as peer or administrative reviewers in the RTP process. It has been our pleasure to work with the authors and reviewers to develop the *UCEA Guidebook on Retention, Tenure, and Promotion.*