

Fu Foundation School of Engineering & Applied Science Tips for Untenured Faculty

Tenure

- The process includes three important hurdles: the department, the school, and the ad hoc. The Provost and the President rarely go against the recommendation of the ad hoc.
- Focus on the department hurdle. Typically a committee of senior or tenured faculty will decide whether or not to put you up for tenure. Get to know all of the senior faculty in your department, especially the chair. Find senior faculty who are willing to mentor you and can review your progress at the end of the first, third, and fifth year. Make sure you get evaluated, and ask for an analysis of any weak points in your progress.
- Your chair should be well-informed about your research. He or she should also have the information needed to explain potential weaknesses or anomalies, as well as strengths, in your dossier.
- Be persistent. While it is your chair's responsibility to make sure the process moves forward, you may want to check in with your chair periodically to be sure that everything is on track.
- Consider making an appointment with the Dean or the Vice Dean before you go up for tenure. They can give you valuable advice.
- Consider asking Stephen Rittenberg for a meeting before you go up for tenure. He can give you a complete overview of the (official) process.
- You may want to annotate your CV. In your publication list, bold or italicize your name so that a reviewer can get a quick idea of your productivity. If you co-author publications with your students, make it clear which of your co-authors are your students.
- Include your highly-cited papers in your tenure package.

Teaching

- Consider teaching all of your courses in one semester. This allows you to concentrate on research during the rest of the year.
- Teach a couple of courses well. Don't continually design new ones.
- If senior faculty ask you to teach a new course, tell them you'll do it when you get tenured. If you must take on a new course, ask for a reduced teaching load.
- Teach courses that are related to your research.
- Consider asking for time-off from teaching during your fifth year when you should be traveling and giving talks so that your community comes to know your latest research.

Service

- Don't let service take up too much of your time. Learn how to say 'no' to committees inside and outside of the University that have little prestige and require a lot of work.
- Professional societies can provide worthwhile service opportunities. Consider the opportunities that will increase your visibility among influential colleagues.
- Junior faculty are supposed to have lighter service loads than senior faculty. If your chair asks you to take on too many service commitments, you may want to respond by saying "I'd really like to do this, but I'm worried it will take away from my research productivity, which could in turn impact my tenure case—what do you think?"
- In your fifth or sixth year you should consider getting on an editorial board of a recognized journal in your field.
- NSF panels are worthwhile. You will learn which proposals get accepted, and it gives you an opportunity to network with senior colleagues as well as program managers. If you haven't been asked to be on a panel by your fifth or sixth year, you may want to call your program manager and ask to be considered for a panel.

- NRC, NAS, and NAE committees are also good service opportunities.

Cultivating Letter Writers

- Travel a lot—especially in your fifth year. You may want to ask for a teaching release so that you can focus on giving talks and attending conferences.
- Approach the top people in your field on a regular basis. Send them your articles. You don't want a letter that says "Oh, I saw them once."
- When you attend professional meetings, allocate time to meet informally with past, current, and potential collaborators.
- Offer to invite and host eminent people from your field for campus visits and presentations.
- Consider running a special session at your professional meeting or a workshop on campus about your area of research. With an on-campus workshop, you won't have to travel, and all of the eminent people come to you. You may also want to co-chair the workshop with a senior colleague. Not only will you get more visibility, but your area of research will also get more attention.
- Find out who cites you. Read their papers, connect with them at meetings, consider co-authoring or co-proposing with them.

Research

- Identify the time of day that you are most productive and protect that time.
- Work on what you publish, and publish what you work on.
- Have a core emphasis that you can call your own, where you have made significant contributions.
- Get people to work for you and with you.
- Work with colleagues that hold up their end; nix the high-maintenance / low-return ones.
- Long, authoritative publications are important (they accrue more citations), but you should also write short articles, which tend to be more timely and easier to revise. Your co-authors will also respond more quickly to short publications.
- Try to get your articles read as soon as they come out. To get a "homerun" articles you need to accrue citations early (i.e., in time for your tenure review).
- Consider turning rejected proposals into papers.
- Citations:
 - Use the same format for your name (e.g., consistent use of the middle initial). When reviewers look up your citations, they may not know to use every possible version of your name.
 - Publish in journals that are indexed by ISI (many peer-reviewed, high quality publications are not indexed by ISI). You may be able to document citations of these works through the ISI "cited reference" function.
 - Publish in journals with full-text access.
 - Use key words in titles and abstracts. You may be able to show that you are among the top-cited people for a specific topic.
- Research Statement:
 - There is no formal page limit, so check with your department chair to find out what is the norm, in some departments it is best to stay within three pages, others expect it to be longer.
 - Don't just focus on what you've done so far. Describe the importance of your work, your trajectory and future plans.

Career Interruptions

If your pre-tenure research is interrupted by a major event (i.e., having a child), there are steps you can take to make sure your productivity does not take a hit:

- Hire additional post-docs, students or technicians.
- Ask the University to hire an adjunct to cover your teaching.
- Hire an assistant to help with administrative tasks.
- Annotate your CV. You cannot expect your referees to know that you have an officially-sanctioned leave. Check with your chair, but in most cases it is worth making a note of it on your CV. Otherwise reviewers evaluating your productivity will just divide the total number of publications by the years since PhD.