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# Understanding the Promotion & Tenure Process

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# Goals

## ■ Institution

- Tenure is a life-long commitment by the university to you
- Successful faculty – innovators, leaders, producers
- Research objectives need to align with institutional directions

## ■ You

- Faculty position that meets your own research and career objectives
- Member of functional, innovative and forward-looking department and institution
- Security offered by tenure





# What can I do now?

- Think about your steps all along the way
  - Consistently evaluate your own progress
    - Goals
    - Mechanisms to get there
    - Ways to learn from others and engage them
  - Keep data on all your activities
  - Ask for feedback
    - Grant writing
    - Papers
    - Teaching
    - Research program organization and development

**This process is the accumulation of years of effort**

**THINK AHEAD!!**





# Understand the General Process

- Learn about the promotion and tenure process at your institution
  - *Ask about the process at every stage if you have questions*
- Request a copy of the policy
  - *Be sure when you are interviewing that the policy is consistent with your personal goals*
- Understand the balance of teaching, research, and service that the institution *AND* the department will expect
- Understand the audience(s) for the materials





# General Process — The Dossier

## ■ Dossier

- Summary of your independent career at institution
- Information on all aspects of your career
  - Research summary (publications, grants, citations, awards)
  - Teaching summary (courses, evaluations, awards)
  - Service summary (activities, awards)
- Inside reviews/letters
- Outside letters – *very important*
  - Writers identified by department
  - Also usually writers identified by individual



# Dossier Components

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- CV as summary of career
  - Education
  - Honors
  - Teaching/advising/mentoring
  - Citations
  - Grants
  - Publications
  - Research/teaching summary written by candidate
- Outside letters



# What Happens After Dossier Is Prepared?

- Department review
  - Tenured faculty generally involved in decision to recommend or deny tenure
  - Department chair writes letter
    - Some schools have subcommittee
- School review
  - Often school-level committee reviews and makes recommendation to dean
  - Dean makes recommendation
- Promotion/Tenure Committee (Provost)
  - Makes recommendation to President
- President sometimes makes final decision

# What Happens After Dossier Is Prepared?

- Department review
  - School review
  - Promotion/Tenure Committee (Provost)
  - President may make final decision
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- **NOTE: Multiple levels of review — no one person makes the decision!**  
**Many voices are part of the process.**







# General Process

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- Understand the timing of preparing the dossier, what you should submit *and* when
  - Think carefully about names for Outside Letters
- Understand the process completely
- Don't wait until the last minute to prepare your materials
  - Think about your research/teaching summary
  - Ensure that your papers are submitted in a timely way
- Ask QUESTIONS if you do not understand





# General Process

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- Outside letters
  - Highly influential in decision process
  - May have opportunity to suggest names
    - Develop relationships - create a network  
**MARKET yourself!**
  - Post-decision: Ask about possibility for feedback from the letters (can be useful)

*Anticipate whom you would want to write letters and get to know those individuals*



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# Factors Considered

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- Research
- Teaching
- Service

These factors combine to reach a decision,  
BUT the specific combination varies widely  
across institutions





# Research

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## Publications

- Used to assess your productivity
  - Numbers vary widely among disciplines
  - Type of publications expected also vary widely
  - Different expectations at different promotion points
- Used to assess the quality of work produced
  - Citations, H-factor, Impact on the field





# Research

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## Publications

- Demonstrate your contributions
- Provide evidence of your unique contributions, particularly in collaborative/cross-disciplinary activities
  - Issues of collaborators
    - How many? How much of your time?
  - Issues of cross-disciplinarity
    - Why did this matter? What did you and your discipline contribute?





# Research

- Grants — important national review of work
  - Demonstrate ability to secure funding for research
- Presentations
  - Invitations reflect status in the field
- Visibility/Engagement/Focus
  - Present at multiple conferences
  - Engage the leaders at those conferences
  - Invite leaders to your institution via department events
  - Reflect on level of focus in work and, if broad, engage multiple communities





# Teaching

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- Effectiveness
  - Often evaluated by students
  - Ask assigned or selected mentor to provide review
- Innovation
  - Think about ways to do it better/more effectively
  - Engage students
- Range/breadth
  - Assignments may be focused or broad
  - Be prepared to teach beyond your comfort zone
- Enthusiasm
  - Convey why you love what you do
  - Occasionally volunteer for something extra





# Teaching

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- Develop a portfolio of your teaching
  - Syllabi
  - Handouts, other notes on courses developed
  - Problem sets
  - Other written materials
  - Computer-based materials, notes on courseware
  - Copies of software developed for courses
  - Examinations
  - Copies of graded papers where there is a significant writing component
  - Evaluation by a colleague
  - Student evaluations





# Service

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- Department
  - Help your department accomplish the faculty's goals
- University
  - Engage in the broad community, but *wisely* — most P/T committees are broad
- National Organizations
  - Choose wisely for visibility with minimum time
- Civic/K12/Outreach Opportunities
  - Choose wisely, but make a difference





# Keeping a Complete Record

## Keep your CV up to date

- Include students mentored at all levels (primary and secondary mentoring)
  - Undergraduates
  - Graduate Students
  - Post-doctoral Associates
- Include advising responsibilities at all levels
- Refereed publications
  - Some institutions request an evaluation of % effort on each
  - Citations — check your “h-factor”
- Abstracts / Conference Proceedings/Presentations
  - Seminars/Workshops/Panels/*etc.*
  - Posters
  - Invited talks at meetings
- Service within university, in community, at (inter)national level



# P/T *versus* Performance Reviews

- Ask your institution about frequency and nature of performance reviews
  - Can be very helpful in guiding activities
  - Opportunity for mid-term feedback
  - Provide an internal view of accomplishments
    - Some may have external letters
    - Dossier can be similar to promotion dossier



# Are there answers to my questions?

- How many publications do I need?
- How much grant funding?
- How many graduate students? Postdocs?
- How many committees? Which ones?
- How good must my teaching be? Does it matter?
- How do I know if I'm doing enough?

There are no “right” answers to these questions, because the process is a composite of all of these and varies from place to place:

**FIND OUT WHAT YOU CAN ABOUT YOUR INSTITUTION - ASK QUESTIONS!!!**





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# Questions?

Ask many, ask often....

