

**Mentoring Faculty in Preparation for
Tenure and/or Promotion**

“A Friendly Advice Manual”

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Introduction

I joined the faculty of the University of Florida as an assistant professor in 1993. At that time, I had been married for five years and was pregnant with my first son. I acquired promotion to associate professor and tenure in 1998. The next year, I gave birth to a second son. In 2003, I gave birth to a third son. I earned promotion to full professor in 2008. I share the birth of my children as an example of how your personal life can also prosper as you pursue your goals of tenure and/or promotion. You can have it all - if you have balance, focus, and discipline within and beyond your identity as a professor.

I compiled this friendly advice regarding preparation for tenure and/or promotion from my experiences during my 20+-year career as an academician in higher education. The advice is meant to be helpful to colleagues in pursuit of tenure and/or promotion. However, this advice is for consideration only and is not intended to replace any policies, recommendations, restrictions, permissions, responsibilities, instructions, guidelines, mandates, standards, etc. you may receive at your institution or for your specific case of tenure and/or promotion. Use the advice that is agreeable and helpful to you; no need for argument – simply disregard the advice that isn't.

I wish you all the best!

Publishing

1. Research, as reflected by publishing, is typically #1 on the list of priorities for tenure and/or promotion if you are at a research-focused or research-focused bound institution. If you are at such an institution but you do not agree with this paradigm, you should seek mentoring from a senior colleague or administrator in your unit or perhaps pursue an opportunity in higher education at an institution that does not place a high priority on publishing.
2. Maintain a focused, strong, consistent, and focused scholarship record. Try to be published 2-3 times every year. Skips in your publication record (i.e., years without any manuscripts published, in press or accepted) may be perceived as instability, lack of commitment, and irresponsible use of academic time, unless you have a documented and reasonable explanation for gaps in your productivity.
3. To support a consistent publication record, try to always have a manuscript in progress (i.e., actively writing a manuscript) and one in key (i.e., under review for publication).
5. Write empirical-based or data-driven articles as much as possible. To do this, you will need to remain engaged in research projects, either individually or with a team of colleagues.
6. Concept and practice-oriented articles can complement research-driven articles, but concept and practice-oriented articles can't compensate for a lack of research-driven articles.
7. Have a balanced authorship record. Single author indicates your ability to be an independent researcher; co-author indicates your ability to collaborate; co-author as first author indicates your ability to lead a collaboration; and co-authorship with graduate students indicates your ability and willingness to mentor future colleagues.
8. When planning to co-author with others, always negotiate roles and order of authors BEFORE writing the manuscript, particularly if the notion of first author is highly valued by your institution. By being proactive in establishing the order of authorship, you can avoid the possibility of dispute with colleagues. How this order of authorship gets established can vary among factors such as the genesis of the research or manuscript idea, the level of research or writing responsibility of each author, or even alphabetical order. One colleague shared her perspective on this with me: "With regards to publication authorship in the sciences, it works like a sandwich and you want to be the bread. Often, the last author on a paper is the ranking author and that position indicates the laboratory where the work was done. Alternatively, on large clinical trials, first authorship indicates the group that was responsible for that specific publication" (Joy Winzerling, 2011, personal correspondence).
9. Ask a trusted and objective colleague to review your manuscripts before you submit them for publication. Attend to the feedback and do show your appreciation to your colleague.
10. Find a writing work schedule that is beneficial to you. Some colleagues write a little every day and some block off time within days or specific days to write. Some colleagues prefer to go away to a place of solitude to engage in large blocks of writing time. Some write late at night.

Find what works for you and stick to it. Treat your writing time appointment with yourself like you would treat any other appointment. Don't be late to and don't skip your appointment!

11. When collaborating with graduate students, do not take advantage of them just to build your research and scholarship record. You should be genuinely concerned about your students' professional development. Remember, these are future colleagues with whom you can establish long-term professional relationships. In addition, your graduate students will benefit from having a strong publication record when they interview for their own faculty positions.

12. Know the acceptance rate and level of readership for the journals in your discipline. Several sources for this information are the journal editor, within the journal jacket, journal websites, and other websites that report journal information. This information is helpful in showcasing the quality of the journal and is particularly advantageous when those reviewing your tenure and/or promotion packet are outside of your discipline.

13. Publish in journals with an acceptance rate of at least 30% or lower. Your university might also value the impact factor of journals. Inquire whether or not this information is important at your institution and make sure to collect it as you go along so you aren't in a panic later.

14. Consider publishing in journals outside of your field as well as inside your field. This shows that there is broad interest in and acceptance of your work. In some instances, journals that do not typically receive manuscripts concerning your topic of interest are very welcoming, particularly if you make a strong case for integrating your field of study with the interest of the journal's readership. For instance, I published a mathematics education-based article in *Reading Research Quarterly*, the journal of the International Reading Association. My article addressed issues that students experience with mathematics terminology and how this related to students' interaction with terminology in general.

15. Be attentive to the context of your specific academic environment in regards to what is valued by colleagues in your department, college, university, and in the broader field. For example, are books more valued than journal articles? Are there particular professional organizations, particularly those that sponsor publications, more valued than others? Make sure you understand your academic landscape so you aren't wasting time pursuing publications or professional services that aren't supportive of how others will view your scholarship. What others think about the venue for your work does matter.

16. Consider the publications of your peers within and outside of your institution. Examine the trends of colleagues' writings, particularly those who have been successful with tenure and/or promotion at your institution. "When in Rome, do as the Romans do!"

17. No matter how good of a game you can talk, if you don't write to disseminate your research, you are not building your publication record. If you need help in this area, seek it!

Spend some time reflecting on your tenure and/or promotion context in regards to Publishing. What concerns do you have? What questions do you have? What suggestions can you contribute?

I welcome your feedback so I can update this section. Send feedback to tla@coe.ufl.edu.
Thanks.

Acquiring Grants

1. Research, as reflected by acquiring grants, shares the #1 spot on the list of priorities for tenure and/or promotion if you are at a research-focused or up-and-coming research-focused institution – this is particularly the case for promotion to full professor. If you are at such an institution but you do not agree with this paradigm, you should seek mentoring from a senior colleague or administrator in your unit or perhaps pursue an opportunity in higher education at an institution that does not place a high priority on external funding.
2. Take advantage of the support (e.g., meetings, seminars, seed support for projects, etc.) provided by your institution.
3. Join listservs and networks that distribute information about upcoming funding opportunities.
4. Know your field and the various sources of funding that are available for research in your field.
5. Collaborate with colleagues who are experienced at writing successful grants. Support the collaboration by learning as much as you can about the art of grant writing and management.
6. No grant is too small (most of the time)!
7. Some grants may be too big and require your collaboration with other principal investigators that the funding agency respects as a successful grant recipient.
8. Follow the proposal writing guidelines of the funding agency to which you are submitting a proposal.
9. Not every great idea is fundable and not every poor idea should be thrown away. Discuss your ideas with trusted colleagues and those in research support offices who can help you refine your ideas.
10. Grant proposals take a long time to develop and grant facilitation can be time-consuming so understand the context of your faculty life and what you can manage at each stage of the process.

Spend some time reflecting on your tenure and/or promotion context in regards to Service. What concerns do you have? What questions do you have? What suggestions can you contribute?

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Teaching

1. After research, teaching is typically the next priority in the tenure and/or promotion process. Teaching is a serious endeavor because it provides an opportunity to directly impact the minds and lives of students, the heartbeat of the institution. Try to teach well at all times. Every now and then, you might have an “off” class or “off” semester, but overall your teaching evaluations should reflect the importance you hold for this major faculty responsibility.
2. Negotiate a course load that supports your efforts toward tenure and/or promotion. If you were able to do this upon hire – great! If you were not able to do this upon hire, you can still ask for a reduction in your course load or course assignments that are less draining on your time and effort.
3. Teaching is not just about preparing for an instructional session and facilitating it for a few hours during the week. Highlight administrative and mentoring roles related to teaching (e.g., selecting, training, supervising and evaluating teaching assistants, coordinating programs, designing courses). All that you do to contribute to the development and delivery of instruction supports teaching at your institution. If there is not a formal place to document such actions on your tenure and/or promotion report, you can incorporate these activities in your teaching philosophy statement.
4. Likewise, there is more to evaluation of teaching than the instruments completed by students. To complement your evaluation of your teaching, submit other evidence such as advising students, peer evaluations, original course syllabi, students’ letters referencing the high quality of your teaching, self-evaluations of your teaching, etc. Try to showcase a well-rounded perspective of your teaching.
5. There are plenty of articles that address how students’ evaluation of teaching can be invalid or related to grades they receive in courses, but until such evaluations are done away with, they matter. So pay attention to your teaching evaluations and use students’ feedback when possible to improve your teaching. Recognize that some things that students criticize you for may not be in your control (e.g., day and time course is offered) but there are many things you can control (e.g., style of your lectures or presentations).
6. If allowed to do so, use a mid-term course evaluation process so you can fix problems students bring to your attention before the end of the course. If you can’t do this, simply ask students directly what things you can work on to improve the course, then follow up on their suggestions to the extent that is appropriate.
7. Try to teach courses that relate to your line of research. Therefore, your scholarship of teaching can be a place to disseminate your research and your research can be supportive of your teaching.
8. Always be prepared for your courses. Most often, students can see when a professor is “winging it” and students are insulted when they feel like a professor is wasting their tuition dollars.

9. If you have the opportunity to co-teach with a colleague, make sure you are proactive in negotiating responsibilities and that you also understand your colleague's style of teaching and working in general. Also, be sure that there is understanding on how students should provide evaluations for a course that is co-taught (e.g., will you and your colleague receive separate evaluations). When both of you are effective instructors, you both win. When one of you is an ineffective instructor, you both might lose.

10. If you need support for your teaching, there are a variety of resources that can help you. Here is one for you to consider:

McKeachie, W. J. (2011). *McKeachie's teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

11. Having a reputation of being the hardest professor in the department won't necessarily support your quest for tenure and/or promotion. Focus on being an effective instructor who genuinely handles course content at levels that are appropriate and who treats students with respect.

12. Be available to students; particularly during your published office hours.

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Service

1. Quality service to the department, college, university, community and your discipline shows that you are a “good citizen” and are valuable to keep the wheels of the institution and the discipline turning. Service does matter – you won’t look good without it, but don’t count on service to get you tenured or promoted.
2. In regards to service to the profession, it is through this avenue that you can nurture relationships with colleagues who might eventually serve as external evaluators for the promotion process. So get involved! Volunteer if you must or ask a colleague to nominate you for a service appointment such as membership to a committee to help you get your feet in the door.
3. Trust that the service you give will be rewarding for you so that you serve sincerely – not just to get something in return.
3. Optimal service positions include president of a national professional organization, chair of a major national committee, chair or member of the board of directors of a national professional organization, and chair of a national conference. Go for the highest post but do so honestly, ethically and with class.
4. Make sure you have the time to serve as you commit yourself. Some service, such as membership on a board of directors, requires extensive travel to board meetings and attendance at conferences. Other service, such as member of an editorial board, requires extensive time to devote to reviewing and responding to manuscripts. Be strategic about service you volunteer for at all levels. Not all committee work is equal, so find out what is entailed in the service before you volunteer.
5. If you feel as if you are being pressed for too much service at the department, college or university level, consult your department chair or senior faculty mentor to discuss the situation and to get advice on making good decisions about service commitments. You can’t be agreeable every time someone asks you to do some type of service.

Spend some time reflecting on your tenure and/or promotion context in regards to Service. What concerns do you have? What questions do you have? What suggestions can you contribute?

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Going Up

1. Take results of evaluations (e.g., annual, three year reviews) by your administrators seriously and make efforts to improve your shortcomings. These are in “black and white” and no matter what people say, what is in writing is what really matters at the end of the day. If you see a red flag, wake up and take action.
2. Review the tenure and/or promotion packets of colleagues who have gone through the process at your institution. If none are readily accessible through the administration, ask a colleague to share his/her packet with you.
3. Review the latest tenure and/or promotion guidelines published by the university and attend any department-, college- or university-sponsored meetings on the topic. Take good notes because often the facilitator will add anecdotes to the written guidelines.
4. Discuss tenure and/or promotion expectations with senior colleagues in the department and college; seek and listen to their advice. You know who the “movers and shakers” are who influence others in your unit; make sure you have clarity about their positions on tenure and/or promotion.
5. Go through an informal external review exercise with colleagues at peer institutions. Ask various colleagues (only those who will not be potential external reviewers) to give you constructive criticism upon reviewing your vitae or reading some of your work. Then follow through on their advice.
6. There’s no formula that applies to everyone, even for colleagues in the same field of study. So work toward exceeding expectations for tenure and/or promotion. At least, don’t just meet the minimum expectations. If you do so and the slightest thing goes wrong, you will be at a disadvantage.
7. Think about who is also going up for tenure and/or promotion when you plan to do so. Technically, it is not supposed to matter. But people are human, and when they are reading multiple packets, they may not always be able to keep their thoughts separated. We certainly desire and honor objectivity in the process and hope that it wins out.
8. Some institutions have a policy of tenure and/or promotion when ready. Know what implications are for the timing of the tenure and/or promotion process for individual faculty. “Tenure when ready” may mean different things at different institutions.
9. Prepare for the process along the way so that you aren’t pressed (and depressed) when close to the deadline of submitting papers for tenure and/or promotion. I suggest you organize your vitae and professional files in a way that is aligned with the tenure and/or promotion guidelines for your institution.

Spend some time reflecting on your tenure and/or promotion context in regards to Going Up. What concerns do you have? What questions do you have? What suggestions can you contribute?

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Networking/External Reviewers

1. How external reviewers are selected can vary from institution to institution. Know the context for selecting external reviewers at your institution. However, it is standard that candidates do not engage in contact with external reviewers for the P&T process.
2. Nurture relationships particularly with colleagues from AAU's if you are at a university that values membership in this association. You begin relationships sometimes by simply sending a colleague an email about his/her work that you read recently. Always be genuine in your approach.
3. Ask colleagues for names of other colleagues that match your scholarship philosophically and methodologically and who are well known in the field. The importance of agreement between your work and the work of external reviewers cannot be understated.
4. Look for external reviewers in the list of references you and your colleagues cite specific to your line of scholarship; consider authors who share your perspective.
5. Select external reviewers from among those colleagues who have appointed you to various service positions in professional organizations.
6. When names are suggested, follow through on those who are also characterized as nice (in the academic sense if not also the personal sense) AND reliable. Nice but not reliable won't get your review in on time. Reliable but not nice might be detrimental to your quest for tenure and/or promotion.
7. Use conference attendance as an opportunity to build a network of colleagues. Also consider connections you have with colleagues through relationships with faculty-friends you have around the nation. Everybody knows somebody!
8. Request the privilege of suggesting names of colleagues who will be selected as external reviewers. This is particularly important if the person (most often the department chair) selecting your external reviewers is not in your field.

Spend some time reflecting on your tenure and/or promotion context in regards to Networking/External Reviewers. What concerns do you have? What questions do you have? What suggestions can you contribute?

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Packet to External Reviewers

1. There is often not a set format for the packet sent to external reviewers. If you have input in its development, be creative but remain professional. For example, select to have your packet bound in an appealing but professional manner. Presentation can't replace quality but poor presentation can distract from quality.
2. The curriculum vita is usually a part of the packet. Make sure it is up-to-date (do this annually to stay on track with recording your professional activities) and organized in a way that highlights important factors that support your promotion and matches your description of your work.
3. Research and teaching statements are commonly part of external review packets. Make sure yours is well-written, concise and focused on the primary points of scholarship you wish to highlight. Avoid excessive jargon and do not be defensive in these pieces.
4. There is often not a set content list for the packet sent to external reviewers. If you have input in the contents, send those items (e.g., manuscripts, statement of research agenda, teaching philosophy, etc.) that will "toot your horn" as a progressive scholar. This is not the time to be superficially modest!
5. Several manuscripts are usually sent in the packet to reviewers. These manuscripts may represent progression through a trajectory of scholarship. Manuscripts may be (a) published, (b) under review, and (c) in progress to represent a trajectory.
6. Manuscripts sent may be sole-authored and co-authored; even those where you are not first author are supportive of your record of scholarship.
7. Don't try to send everything you've ever published – just send a sampling of the good stuff!
8. Follow all guidelines regarding selection and contact or lack thereof of external reviewers.

Spend some time reflecting on your tenure and/or promotion context in regards to Packet to External Reviewers. What concerns do you have? What questions do you have? What suggestions can you contribute?

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You

1. No one will do the work of a professor for you. Cross your T's and dot your I's. You may receive some favor, but don't expect favor to do what you can do for yourself.
2. Create balance in your life. A healthy you supports a healthy professor. So take the time you need to nurture yourself.
3. Don't count on everybody liking you – hey, you won't even like everybody. However, avoid creating conflict with colleagues. It won't do you any good to have adversarial relationships with those who are in position to guide and mentor you.
4. Be patient. Every decision level for tenure and/or promotion takes time, so be patient and while you wait, keep moving forward.
5. Use common sense. Don't go forward with the process for tenure and/or promotion unless you have confidence that you will be successful. It is better for you to take the extra year to seek employment elsewhere than to receive a rejection in the process. That negative action might hinder future job opportunities when you are forced to leave the university if you do not receive tenure.
5. It is important to be at peace with and have confidence in yourself. No one can be as good at being you than you!

Spend some time reflecting on your tenure and/or promotion context in regards to You. What concerns do you have? What questions do you have? What suggestions can you contribute?

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