
AC 2012-5374: NEGOTIATING THE TENURE AND PROMOTION PROCESS

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Negotiating the Tenure and Promotion Process

Abstract

A tenure and promotion panel discussion and question and answer session was conducted during a management, technology, and applied engineering conference. The purpose of this forum was to provide junior faculty members—tenure track assistant professors primarily—with perspectives on negotiating the reappointment, tenure, and promotion process. It also provided audience members who make tenure and promotion recommendations with an opportunity to share their perspectives and to glean insights. Tenure and promotion continue to be ubiquitous topics on which to write and present at the ASEE Annual Conference and similar conferences where many of the attendees, including audience members and presenters, are pursuing tenure and promotion or who make tenure and promotion recommendations. Administered properly, tenure and promotion panel discussions and question and answer sessions can be of value to those pursuing tenure and promotion and to those who make tenure and promotion recommendations.

Introduction

Through 2011 and since 1996, when ASEE began indexing its annual conference papers¹, a total of four annual conference papers were published containing the term “promotion and tenure” in the title. During this same period, 11 annual conference papers were published containing the term “tenure and promotion” in the title. Moreover, 23 papers were published containing the term “promotion” in the title and 46 papers were published containing the term “tenure” in the title. After removing the 15 papers retrieved using the two “promotion” and “tenure” combinations, there was a net of eight “promotion” annual papers published and a net of 31 “tenure” annual papers published. Of the eight “promotion” annual papers published, five appeared to focus on addressing the needs of tenure track assistant professors. The other three focused on promotion in terms of campaigning or advertising. Of the 31 “tenure” annual papers published, 23 appeared to focus on the needs of tenure track assistant professors. The other eight tended to focus on tenure related issues, such as post tenure review or relinquishing tenure. The topic of tenure and promotion continues to elicit interest and appears to be of value to ASEE Annual Conference audience members, authors, and presenters.

The purpose of this paper was to share the findings of a tenure and promotion panel discussion and forum that was offered during a management, technology, and applied engineering conference².

The following comprised the panel discussion and forum description:

Panel Discussion and Forum: Negotiating the Tenure & Promotion Process

A panel discussion and audience forum on the ins-and-outs of navigating the Tenure & Promotion process, for the benefit of Assistant and Non- Tenured professors. The panel of tenured faculty and administrators will share their own experiences in navigating the process themselves and overseeing it for junior faculty².

The time allocated for the panel discussion and forum was fifty-five minutes.

Method

In preparation for the panel discussion and forum, an inquiry was made seeking questions and concerns from a defined population of potential audience members and panelists (E. Tetteh, personal communication, May 27, 2011). The solicitation made said:

Dear members,

We are planning another Tenure & Promotion Panel discussion and Q&A.... Do you have topics and issues you'd like to know more about? Send me your ideas that can help us plan the content and find the right panelists.

The following are the inputs that were received from the member solicitation (E. Tetteh, personal communication, October 5, 2011):

- *Techniques, strategies, etc that have resulted in successful tenure and promotion*
- *Promotion to full Professor*
- *Faculty ~ Reappointment/ Promotion and Tenure*
- *Shared University Governance*
- *TECHNOLOGY Based discipline with respect to the "BOYER'S ~ model", which is Scholarship of "Teaching-Applied Research- Innovation/ Application and Integration"*
- *How to divine [sic] out what my particular P&T committee will *really* [sic] base their decision on without negative political fallout*
- *How can you find out what your P&T committee will *actually value* [sic] in time to do something about your "first impression"?*
- *Many technology colleges and departments are teaching focused with moderate to heavy teaching loads From [sic] conversations, it would appear that many universities are now expecting a research agenda from faculty with not so much reduced teaching expectations. Is this observation true in general?*
- *What do you see as the trends for universities expecting junior faculty in developing a research agenda?*
- *Are departments weighing the research more heavily than teaching (from my perspective, this is a dramatic shift).*
- *Are universities valuing applied research as much as basic research in this process?*
- *Institutional Criteria and Procedures for assembling external reviewers for tenure/promotion applicants*
- *Developing an effective roster of possible external reviewers... for the R, T & P process*

Concurrently, an invitation was extended to a defined population of potential panelists who possessed and would be willing to share their tenure and promotion process experiences (E. Tetteh, personal communication, October 3, 2011). The solicitation made said:

Dear members,

We are planning another Tenure & Promotion Panel discussion and Q&A.... Do you want to be one of the panelists? The only requirements are to be a tenured faculty and provide the following information:

- Full Name as you wish it to appear in the program with correct title you prefer to use (Mr./Ms./Dr., etc.)*
- Position at school (i.e., Professor, Emeritus, Dean, Department Head, etc.)*
- Institution (College / University)*
- Administrative Unit (i.e., department name, or "School of..." or "College of..." within a University.*
- Experience with the Tenure and Promotion process at your institution*

The original panel was comprised of five individuals (E. Tetteh, personal communication, October 5, 2011). Their rank and administrative responsibilities, if any, and their institutional Carnegie profile³ are as follows:

Professor and Associate Dean

Undergraduate Instructional Program—Prof+A&S/HGC: Professions plus arts & sciences, high graduate coexistence; Graduate Instructional Program—CompDoc/NMedVet: Comprehensive doctoral (no medical/veterinary); and a Community Engagement—Outreach and Partnerships Carnegie classification—category institution.

Professor

Undergraduate Instructional Program/Prof+A&S/HGC—Professions plus arts & sciences, high graduate coexistence; Graduate Instructional Program—Doc/Prof: Doctoral, professional dominant; and a Community Engagement—Curricular Engagement and Outreach and Partnerships Carnegie classification—category institution.

Professor

Undergraduate Instructional Program—Assoc: Associates Carnegie classification—category institution.

Associate Professor

Undergraduate Instructional Program—Assoc: Associates Carnegie classification—category institution.

In addition, three of the four institutions represented were collective bargaining institutions.

The fifth panelist was unable to participate: a professor and department head from an Undergraduate Instructional Program—Prof+A&S/HGC: Professions plus arts & sciences, high graduate coexistence; Graduate Instructional Program—CompDoc/MedVet: Comprehensive doctoral with medical/veterinary; and a Community Engagement—Curricular Engagement and Outreach and Partnerships Carnegie classification—category institution.

The panel was moderated by an associate professor and assistant vice president for academic affairs from an Undergraduate Instructional Program—Bal/NGC: Balanced arts & sciences/professions, no graduate coexistence Carnegie classification—category institution.

Once identified, the panelists were sent the suggested inputs solicited from the potential forum attendees in preparation for the forum. The panelists were asked to review the inputs and to identify two to three topics on which they would talk.

At the session, the moderator welcomed the panelist and the audience members and asked the panelist to introduce themselves, share a few words about their tenure and promotion experience, and the tenure and promotion process at their institution. A discussion and question and answer session followed the introductory remarks.

Results

The following is a record of the original questions and concerns and a synthesis of the associated discussion:

Techniques, strategies, etc that have resulted in successful tenure and promotion

- Be a person of integrity. Exercise outstanding judgment. Be a facilitator of synergy.
- Professional development: documenting improvements in the delivery of instruction—assessment of instruction; service—service learning and its impact on students, the faculty, the department, the college, and college and community; peer evaluation—make use of outside reviewers (ie nursing, English, history, etc); leadership skills development—in service activities, in professional organizations, etc.
- Develop a research agenda—publishing, to an extent, is a measure of having develop a research agenda. However, the publication of 20 referred proceedings and journal articles does not necessarily make up a research agenda.

Promotion to full Professor (promotion to full professor was not necessarily the focus of the panel discussion and forum)

- After the research agenda has been established as an associate professor, sustain it. Then begin contributing to the maintenance of the institution.

Faculty ~ Reappointment/ Promotion and Tenure

- Should post tenure review be included in the discussion? Probably not, since the forum's focus was on the promotion and tenure of assistant professors.

Shared University Governance

- May or may not be applicable—campuses vs main campus requirements
- Applicability also—union, collective bargaining, unit handbooks, department handbooks, division handbooks, etc.

TECHNOLOGY Based discipline with respect to the "BOYER'S ~ model", which is Scholarship of "Teaching-Applied Research- Innovation/ Application and Integration"

- Colleagues, committees, and the administration need to be knowledgeable and have bought into the Boyer model—the scholarship of:
 - Discovery, which includes original research that advances knowledge.
 - Integration, which involves synthesis of information across disciplines, across topics within a discipline, or across time.
 - Application/engagement, which goes beyond the service duties of a faculty to those within or outside the University and involves the rigor and application of disciplinary expertise with results that can be shared with and/or evaluated by peers.
 - Teaching and learning, or the systematic study of teaching and learning processes.

*How to divine [sic] out what my particular P&T committee will *really* [sic] base their decision on without negative political fallout*

- Are the committees staffed with folks of integrity? If so, approach them individually and in small groups with what you feel they are basing their decision upon. Let them respond or do the fine tuning rather than making them do the work. There may be some negative political fallout. If there's a sense there will be significant negative political fallout, what needs fixing is not what you're going to be doing or have done; what needs fixing is what's created the means for negative political fallout to take place. The place may have been mismanaged for years by those who have been arbitrary, capricious, and otherwise random in administering a reward system.
- What committees or who (departmental, college, Provost's, etc) will look at the documentation and what comprises the documentation needs to be considered.
- Some may look at the following:
 - Student opinion of instruction result vs grades awarded
 - Teaching awards
 - Letters of support from others than those from the external reviewers.

*How can you find out what your P&T committee will *actually value* [sic] in time to do something about your "first impression"?*

- Find out (1) what the P&T committee members are doing, (2) what the institution is acknowledging and rewarding, and (3) what the in-your-field trends are and how they match the mission of the institution.

Many technology colleges and departments are teaching focused with moderate to heavy teaching loads From [sic] conversations, it would appear that many universities are now expecting a research agenda from faculty with not so much reduced teaching expectations. Is this observation true in general?

- Generally speaking, and based on the institutional mission, there is a greater emphasis in general on research, creative activity, and outreach. Each department has to fine tune the trend.

What do you see as the trends for universities expecting junior faculty in developing a research agenda?

- Generally speaking there is an expectation of faculty members to have developed a research agenda. The extent will be determined by the institutional mission. The degree to which a faculty member has a research agenda will be borne out by external reviewers. This is why reviewers should come from peer institutions.

Are departments weighing the research more heavily than teaching (from my perspective, this is a dramatic shift).

- Depends on institutional mission. Generally speaking, yes. In part, it's easier to assess and evaluate research than teaching.

Are universities valuing applied research as much as basic research in this process?

- Depends on institutional mission. Focus on the mission of the institution and if it does not value applied research as much as you feel it should or as much as your research agenda suggests, perhaps there's a mismatch. Alternative is to make a case for valuing applied research. So much of one's success is going to depend on what one does to make "stuff happen". Beliefs and values may be so entrenched, and there are reasons for this, that you may not be able to make the necessary headway in the limited time you have.

Institutional Criteria and Procedures for assembling external reviewers for tenure/promotion applicants

- First and foremost, look at specific institutional criteria and procedures. If there's an interest in making comparisons, look to peer institutions first.
- Be familiar with the external review process—who compiles the list from which reviewers are selected, qualifications of potential peer reviewers, nature of the external review letters, CV provided or not, all research and creative activities or just papers.

Developing an effective roster of possible external reviewers... for the R, T & P process

- If this is going to take place, list should be comprised of peer institution colleagues.
- Formulation of the roster or list is guided by the tenure and promotion documents.

Additional Comments:

- Key is going to be one's integrity and their ability to adapt to the culture of the organization.
- Keep in mind the tenure committee(s) are caretakers of taxpayer dollars. They're committing lots of taxpayer dollars to granting an individual tenure.
- Institutions cannot support one's research agenda. More and more, seed monies are being awarded to new faculty. One must pursue support for their research agenda. In addition to supporting the research, the funds should support travel to present the research findings and page fees for disseminating the findings. Funding is also part of the validation process.

- Know when to talk about your accomplishments and when not. Keep in mind, your accomplishments are a reflection and reflect upon the department, college, and institution.
- *FolioWeb* and like portals for managing online electronic portfolios—the future—vs paper portfolios.

Discussion

The topic of tenure and promotion continues to elicit interest and appears to be of value to ASEE Annual Conference audience members, authors, and presenters. The intent of this paper was to share the findings of a tenure and promotion panel discussion and forum that was offered during a management, technology, and applied engineering conference. The forum was developed by the forum moderator. Concurrent inputs were sought: one focused on the solicitation of topics and issues that needed attention, the other was a solicitation of qualified panel members.

Key topics of interest for discussion appeared to focus on managing the tenure and promotion process, identifying that which is of value, research and the development of a research agenda, and the relationships between the candidate and the various committees, including the external reviewers. Mentorship received little if any attention, and reappointment, which is from what tenure and promotion evolves, received little attention.

Future forums, if they are to be confined to a fifty-five minute blocks of time should, focus on selected topics and delve deeper into them. While some audience members may leave with a gem, generally speaking, cursory examinations are of limited value. Future forums could also be developed around themes, such as the external review process. Future forums could also focus on administrators' perspectives, or committee member perspectives. Solicitations of topics probably ought to contain constraints—ie, the forum will not focus on post-tenure reviews or promotion to full professor, or that is on what those forums will focus.

The topic of tenure and promotion can continue eliciting interest and can continue to be of value to ASEE Annual Conference audience members, authors, and presenters. Opportunities abound for making improvements in what can be offered.

References

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