Preparing For Your Third-Year Review

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Abstract

An intensive performance review during the third year of a tenure-track position is common practice at many institutions. The third-year review can be a useful opportunity for external feedback, as well as internal reflection, on a junior faculty member's progress toward tenure. However, preparing for a third-year review can be intimidating or frustrating for junior faculty, especially if an institution's guidelines for preparing review materials are very open-ended. This paper supplies strategies for preparing core and supplementary materials for an intensive third-year review. Suggestions are given for personally-reflective statements and corresponding types of documentation that can be assembled into a coherent and concise package. The ideas summarized in this paper can be selectively used to prepare a third-year review package which best reflects a junior faculty member's current and planned professional development.

I. Introduction

It is the policy of many institutions to conduct an intensive review of junior faculty during the third-year of a tenure-track appointment. The third year is ostensibly the "halfway point" to the tenure review, so the purpose of a third-year review is usually to assess a candidate's progress toward tenure, allowing the candidate subsequent time to act on any recommended corrective strategies and/or to improve their record of accomplishments. For engineering faculty, third-year review materials will generally need to demonstrate a record of achievement and planned improvement in research, teaching, and service-related issues.

Preparing for an intensive third-year review can be difficult for junior faculty, for many reasons. This review may be the first time young faculty go through the scrutiny of a peer review process where the "peers" are people they work with on a daily basis. This review may be the first time junior faculty seriously try to interpret and apply an institution's promotion and tenure criteria to their own credentials and situation. Finally, trying to assemble a coherent package of materials to represent your professional achievements and potential can be a seemingly overwhelming task, especially if few concrete guidelines for this task are set by your school, division, or institution. This paper presents some strategies for preparing a package of third-year review materials, with suggestions for specific types of documentation that may be included.

II. Fundamental Strategies

The first fundamental strategy supercedes all other information given in this paper.
> *1. Find out what the rules (both written and unwritten) for your department, school, or division are, and follow them.*

A somewhat cynical justification for becoming aware of both the written and the unwritten rules is the saying that "in theory, there's no difference between theory and practice, but in practice,

there is." If you have a trusted, established faculty mentor, ask them about the rules for the third-year review, and ask them how these rules have been applied in the past. Are there traps that other people have fallen into, but which you can avoid? Are there standard practices or formats for preparing your review materials that are not given as written instructions, but are generally accepted? Can your mentor provide any advice or guidance, or feedback on your materials before you submit them for review?

After you've talked with your mentor (or if you don't have an established mentor), find someone in your department, division, or school who has gone through the third-year review recently, and ask them if they have any advice for you. What rules did they follow? Would it be possible for you to look at their materials, and use them as a model for preparing your own? Experienced mentors and peer mentors (*i.e.*, other junior faculty) will probably have slightly different perspectives on your situation, and may be able to offer different – but equally useful – kinds of advice. For example, an established faculty member might give you insight on the historical development or general philosophy of typical promotion and tenure cases at your institution, while a peer mentor might have more immediate, practical information to offer (How long did it take to assemble their materials? What do they think were the most compelling parts of their materials?)

Once you've found out what the rules/criteria are for your third-year review, make sure that your application follows the rules and clearly meets the given criteria. This brings up the second fundamental strategy:

    2. Treat your third-year review as a "trial run" of your tenure review.

Take this third-year review process seriously, and remember that while your record is being evaluated, you are also in a position to watch how the priorities of your institution are expressed and acted upon during the review. Whether your experience is enlightening, reassuring, or dismaying, it is probably appropriate to assume that your upcoming tenure review will proceed in a generally similar fashion.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has regulations stating that employees are entitled to know the hazards (and protective measures) of potentially dangerous chemicals in the workplace; these fundamental communication standards are often referred to as "Right to Know" laws. You, too, have a "Right to Know" fundamental information about your third-year and tenure review processes. Even if you were given information when you started your tenure-track position, ask your department chair and/or dean *again after your second year* about the timeline, rules, and criteria for both the third-year and the tenure review processes. Some policies may have changed, and you may be asked to supply materials for your "third-year" review almost immediately after your second year on the job. Table 1, on the next page, supplies some fundamental "Right to Know" questions, which you certainly have the right to ask your department chair or dean.

Your institution may not have clearly defined, easily interpretable guidelines or answers for some of the questions listed in Table 1. If so, you may find Section III of this paper helpful in preparing your materials, and Section IV of this paper helpful as you wait to learn the outcome of your review.

Category of Information	Specific Questions to Ask
Types of Documentation	• What general types of materials are you expected to provide for review? How many copies do you need to supply? Is there a defined list of specific materials to include? • Should a teaching portfolio be part of your materials? If so, what should be included, and how should it be organized? What about a research portfolio? • Will you need to supply copies of all of your scholarly publications or works, or only those that you deem most significant? • Will you need to solicit letters of support from your colleagues? If so, how many letters will you need, and what constitutes an "appropriate" candidate to write these letters? • Should you provide a list of potential references? If so, when? What determines if a reference is appropriate? • What is the timeline for assembling and submitting your materials?
Review Procedures	• What is the timeline for review of the material? When will you receive summative written feedback? Who within your institution will be reviewing your material? • Will people from outside your institution review your material? If so, how will these people be selected? • Will people from significantly different disciplines than your own be reviewing your material?
Determining Quality of Materials	• Will your credentials be simply counted (number of publications, number of pages published, sum total of grant monies, number of courses taught, number of students advised, *etc.*)? Will some formula or weighting scheme be used? • How will the quality of your teaching or student advising be assessed?
Expected Balance or Weighting of Materials	• Is there a standard and expected weighting of research, teaching, and service activities? Or is the balance or relative importance of these activities set on an individual basis? • Should your materials be assembled to reflect any given weighting (more information on research activities, say, than on service activities)?

Table 1. "Right to Know" questions. After your second year in a tenure-track appointment, ask whether and how these issues are handled differently for the third-year review and the tenure review. Taken from Diamond, 1994[1].

There are a few more fundamental strategies to keep in mind.

3. Start assembling documentation materials early.

Keep your curriculum vitae (c.v.) up to date. Don't consider a manuscript to be fully accepted until you've noted that fact on your c.v. When you submit an abstract to a meeting, make updating your c.v. the last task you do before you consider the abstract submission process completed. When you sign the cover page of a student's thesis, take that opportunity to make sure your c.v. accurately lists the title of the student's work. Buy a cheap, cardboard, expandable folder, and keep one or two hard copies of every item (abstracts, teaching evaluations, papers, *etc.*) that you list on your c.v. Having a wide range of potential documentation material in one easily accessible place will save a tremendous amount of time when you begin to assemble your third-year review package.

If you write research grants, you understand the importance of the next fundamental strategy.

4. Make your materials look good and read easily.

This will take extra time, but your materials comprise a professional document that reflects your past achievements and your future career potential. They deserve to be presented appropriately.

Go to an office supply store and buy nice, matching three-ring binders to hold your materials. Buy (commonly-available) divider tabs with labels that can be computer-printed, and use them. Aesthetics aside, take the time to make the information you supply to the reviewers easy to locate, and easy to "grade." Make a table of contents, use subsections or separate three-ring binders to distinguish different categories of information. Do what you can to make the reviewers' jobs easy.

5. Don't be modest. Do be accurate.

Some people find various forms of "self-promotion" distasteful. The third-year review is not a time to be overly modest or to discount your own hard work. Be proud of what you've accomplished. If you have encountered obstacles to your research, teaching, or professional activities, your third-year review materials are not the place to discuss the complexities of the situation in detail. Briefly state what the obstacle was, that it was difficult to work through, that you did eventually triumph or find a way to work around it, and that since the obstacle is no longer an issue, you are ready to tackle exciting new projects. This way, your materials reflect a sense of achievement and enthusiasm while accurately describing where you've had to focus your efforts.

Being accurate also means being careful not to overstate your accomplishments. Don't pad your c.v. with trivial items, or cross the line between "confidence" and "arrogance." If you have doubts about the significance of an item on your c.v., or the tone of your materials, ask a friend or mentor for their opinion.

The final fundamental strategy is not as silly as it may sound at first.

6. Anticipate and prepare for the possibility that the review process may be stressful.

Schedule more time than you think you will need to prepare your materials so that you are not under extra, deadline-induced stress. Schedule some kind of private celebration and a day or two of "down time" for yourself after you hand your materials in, even if you are certain that you'll have nothing to celebrate or that you won't be stressed out. Celebrate completing the task, your accomplishments to date and your future successes. Section IV of this paper goes into further detail about "staying sane" as you wait to hear the outcome of your review.

III. Core and Supplementary Materials

A. Selectivity: What to Include? Hopefully you will be given a concrete list of items that you will need to submit for your third-year review. You may be asked to select a certain number of significant publications, or items that reflect "your best work", and you may be given some limitations on the total amount of material that you can submit for review. If you are given explicit instructions, then by all means, follow them.

It is also possible that you may be given little or no concrete information about what materials you will need to submit. Justification given for this lack of direction may be that the review committee "doesn't want to limit you" or "prefers to see what you consider important information." If this is the case, you may find yourself wondering about the criteria to be used in reviewing your material. It can become tempting to submit copies of everything you can think of, on the off-chance that a reviewer might want to see a particular item. Collecting and

submitting huge volumes of paper can rapidly bring you to a point of diminishing returns. Too much information is nearly impossible to coherently organize, takes forever to photocopy and assemble, can give the impression that you are trying to "bluff" your way through the review, and can consume your valuable time. If you are placed in the unfortunate position of having to decide, without clear instructions or mentoring, what information should be included in your third-year review materials then the following "self-mentoring" questions adapted from Seldin's book on teaching portfolios[2] may be helpful for you to consider:

- Does your overall package of materials clearly identify what you are doing with your career, how you do it, why you are doing it this particular way?
- Does the balance and weighting of the information in your overall package reflect the (expected or actual) balance and weighting of your professional activities?
- Is a descriptive table of contents included?
- Are self-reflective observations included?
- Have you documented efforts to improve your work?
- Are any creative or innovative approaches to teaching, research, or service clearly described and emphasized?
- Is every claim in narrative or reflective portions of your materials supported by some form of presented evidence – in an appendix, for example?
- Does every item or piece of evidence you chose to include support a claim in a unique manner? If not, should the item be included?

For engineering faculty, third-year review materials will generally need to demonstrate a <u>record of achievement</u> and <u>planned improvement</u> in research, teaching, and service-related issues. At a minimum, your third year review package should include an up-to-date c.v. (*i.e.*, achievement), reflective statements on your past record and future plans for research, teaching, and service (both achievement and planned improvements), and selected documentation to provide examples of the quality of your work (achievement as well as the potential to implement planned improvements). The remainder of this section of this paper offers you suggestions on crafting the three major components (c.v., reflective statements, and supporting documentation) of your third-year review package.

B. Structuring Your Curriculum Vitae. Your c.v. is one part of your third-year review package that most reviewers will read, so assembling a well-organized and accurate c.v. is important. Make sure that you follow any written or unwritten institutional rules regarding the format of your c.v. A 1997 article in the *ASEE Prism* by Greene and Van Kuren[3] included a "CV Checklist," which listed information to include in a c.v. and is directly quoted in Table 2.

You may want to arrange the items on your c.v. in order of personal importance or institutional priority; this may not correspond to the order of items in Table 2. Other items you may want to note on your c.v. are alternative evidence of institutional service (student groups advised; special projects for your department or school), professional service (chaired conference sessions; journals for which you have reviewed manuscripts; proposal or fellowship review panels upon which you served), and research and teaching productivity (invited talks or seminars given; proposals submitted; proposals declined; abstracts and presentations).

Category	Items to Include
"Courses Taught	Course number, title, and enrollment; Student evaluations
Students Advised	Graduate: Include your designation (advisor/co-advisor); the title of the thesis, dissertation, or creative component; the date of completion. Undergraduate: Include your designation; special research projects; the date of completion.
Papers Published or Accepted for Publication	Refereed; Nonrefereed; Proceedings; Research reports and others
Intellectual Properties	Patents; Disclosures; Copyrighted material of special note
External Funding	Source; Date; Amount; Level of Responsibility
Professional Society Activities	Offices held; Committee work
Campus Committee Assignments	School or department; College; University
Honors and Awards	Title and awarding group; Date; Significance"

Table 2. "The CV Checklist," quoted from Greene and Van Kuren, 1997[3].

C. Waxing Philosophical. Including some form of reflective self-assessment in your third-year review materials is important. A reflective essay allows you to evaluate your own credentials, justify the items you chose to include in your review materials, and enumerate your future plans. This shows the reviewers what your priorities are, and that you are capable of self-evaluation (and therefore, hopefully, positive change). Diamond[4] has noted that other important types of information are readily available from a self-reflective essay, but not from a c.v. or collection of publications, including:

- A description of career development issues from your perspective,
- Rationale for the professional choices you have made to date,
- The extent to which your career development expectations have been met to date,
- A description of circumstances which promoted or inhibited your success,
- The significance of your work and contributions to your community, from your perspective.

You may find it convenient to include short statements of your personal philosophies of research, teaching, and service with your third-year review materials. Separating these three areas can allow you to focus your essays. However, it can be very difficult to clearly articulate your guiding philosophies, even if you set out to write a relatively brief (1 to 2 page) statement. The bulleted points listed above are good starting points for drafting a reflective statement on any portion of your professional development. Table 3 presents other questions that you could work from to generate a written statement of your philosophies of research, teaching, and service.

If you are working on a very creative or innovative project (whether in the general area of research, teaching, or service) you may want to spend extra time in your reflective statements explaining to reviewers why the project is an example of significant professional work, worthy of respect. This may be especially important if you worry that your project will not valued highly by the reviewers (*i.e.*, relative rankings of research versus teaching, or teaching versus

service). If this is the case, the information presented in Table 4 may help you craft an argument that your project is truly an important and scholarly undertaking.

Research	Teaching	Service
What are some unique challenges and opportunities in your field of research?	What assumptions do you hold about teaching?	What forms of service (department, school, professional society, academic community, public community) do you currently spend your time on?
How is your field of research developing with time? How does your work fit into the development of the field?	Who can and should benefit from a college education?	What forms of service would you ideally spend your time on?
Do you primarily work with collaborators, or alone? Why?	Is the function of higher education to train or to educate students?	Many "service" tasks don't yield personal financial gain, or admiration from peers. Yet you do them anyway. Why?
How do (or will) your personal research efforts contribute to a "big picture" or larger idea?	What is your preferred style of teaching? Do you change your teaching style to accommodate different learning styles? Why or why not?	How, in general, do you best contribute to teams? Can you relate this to how you contribute to the "team" of your department? Your school? Your community?
Why is it crucial for someone to do the type of research that you do?	How do you assess whether students are learning the material in your courses? Why do you assess learning in that way?	What is the difference between "collegiality" and "service"? Are they related?
What research have you published that you are particularly proud of? Why?	How do the courses you teach fit into the total education of your students? Do you focus on content mastery, crucial for subsequent higher-level applications? Do you focus on specific problem-solving strategies or design theories?	
What are some of the research goals you hope to achieve within the next few years? The next ten years? Beyond?	What types of projects, exams, homework assignments do you use? Why?	
	What is particularly challenging or enjoyable about teaching your courses in particular? About teaching in general?	
	Is there a quotation about teaching or learning that you have found inspiring for some reason? What is it, and why did it resonate with you?	

Table 3. "Starter Questions" for use in articulating your philosophies of research, teaching and service. The first five questions about teaching are taken from Murray's 1997 publication on developing and evaluating a teaching portfolio[5].

	"The Basic Features of Scholarly and Professional Work
1.	The activity requires a high level of discipline-related expertise.
2.	The activity breaks new ground, is innovative.
3.	The activity can be replicated or elaborated.
4.	The work and its results can be documented.
5.	The work and its results can be peer-reviewed.
6.	The activity has significance or impact."

Table 4. What constitutes scholarly work? Information quoted from reference 6, where it is referred to as originating from reference 7.

D. Documentation Ideas. Use whatever media (electronic, video, audio, paper *etc.*) and types of information that helps make the strongest case for your work, and that follow the rules for your department and institution. Table 5 presents potential documentation you could use to demonstrate the quality of your research, teaching, and service work. Select the types of documentation that are most important and relevant for you, your field, and your institution.

Research	*Teaching*	*Service*
Copies of publications in refereed journals; include information about contributions of multiple authors and acceptance rates of the journals	Statement of teaching responsibilities and description of the way each course was taught, and why	Lists of committees on which you've served, including any chairs held, dates of service, and challenging committee assignments
Copies of review papers written for professional journals	Course syllabi	Copies of presentations made for community organizations
Copies of successful (and declined) research proposals to competitive sources; include review comments or scores if appropriate	Quantitative student evaluations of teaching and student comments on your teaching	A description and appraisal of your work as an advisor to student organizations, and of any challenging projects or awards won by the student groups
Copies of publications in conference proceedings, books, professional bulletins, and other non-refereed sources	Descriptions of curricular or course revisions, including new projects, assignments, and instructional materials	Descriptions and appraisals of contributions made to professional organizations; note offices held, committee assignments, etc.
Lists or abstracts of presentations at conferences; especially note invited presentations or international conferences	Students' scores on pre- and post-course examinations	Evidence of work as a consultant on student disciplinary matters, or of participation in institutional recruitment efforts
Frequency counts of citation of your research publications and inclusion of your research work in review papers	Awards for teaching, noting selection criteria and information about the awarding group	Lists of scholarly publications or funding agencies for which you have performed review services
Awards for research, noting selection criteria and information about the awarding group	Statements from colleagues who have observed you teach in the classroom	Awards for service, noting selection criteria and information about the awarding group
Drafts or lists of manuscripts and proposals in preparation or submitted	A videotape of you teaching a typical class	Lists or programs from seminars, symposia, or workshops that you organized
Evidence of national or international reputation in your field of research (collaborations, invitations, *etc.*)	A statement by your department chair assessing your contributions to the department's curriculum	Copies of guides, handbooks, newsletters, circulars, etc.

Table 5. Types of documentation you could use in your third-year review materials. This list is not all-inclusive. "Research" information taken from reference 8; "Teaching" from 9, and "Service" from 10.

If you are a visual person, you may want to use a computer-drawn graphic or chart to help illustrate your career accomplishments and direction. The appendix of this paper supplies sample graphics which could be used in a third-year review process to provide overviews of a faculty member's activities from a time-oriented, or calendar perspective, and from the perspective of balancing the demands of research, teaching, and service. Graphics could also be made to illustrate the relationships between short-term and long-term goals as well as between a "big picture" and a "little picture" of your research, teaching, or service activities.

Whatever types of documentation you choose to provide for your third-year review materials, organize the information such that it is easy to locate, and easy to evaluate. One strategic approach for organizing your materials is to present "core" materials in a small, one-inch-thick binder, and to present supplementary documentation and examples in separate appendix binders (as many as you feel you need). Suggested "core" contents for this type of organization strategy are given in Table 6.

Core Section Title	Core Materials
INTRODUCTION	• Synopsis: Philosophies of Research, Teaching, and Service (1 page) • Graphic: Balance of Research, Teaching, and Service (1 page) • Full Curriculum Vitae
RESEARCH	• Philosophy of Research (2 pages) • Research Projects and Directions (2 pages) • List of Research Awards and Honors • List of Patents and Intellectual Property • List of Major Invited Presentations • Abstracts of Student Theses Supervised • Abstracts of Research Publications • Abstracts of Research Proposals
TEACHING	• Philosophy of Teaching (2 pages) • Education Projects and Directions (2 pages) • List of Education Awards and Honors • Graphic of Quantitative Teaching Evaluation Results • List of Courses Taught • Course Syllabi • List of Education Abstracts and Presentations • List of Education Publications
SERVICE	• Philosophy of Service (1 page) • List of Service Activities

Table 6. Suggested organization for "core" materials to supply for your third-year review.

Subsequent documentation can then be provided in separate three-ring binders as appendices (for example, copies of representative or all publications and research proposals, or a teaching portfolio). This organizational strategy allows reviewers to easily see an overview of your work in the "core" materials, while allowing the opportunity to carefully review examples of your work provided in the appendices.

IV. Staying Sane

In New Orleans, one printed set of instructions to jury duty participants notes (accurately) that "the wheels of justice do sometimes grind slowly."[11] The wheels of academia similarly "grind slowly," and there's not a whole lot that you can do about it. You cannot speed up the review process. You may painstakingly prepare your review materials, submit them, and then receive no feedback for an extended period of time (months). If this is the first time you have been subjected to critical peer review where the "peers" are people to whom you are personally connected – with whom you work on a daily basis, collaborate, are friends – it may be difficult to separate the evaluation of your *work* from an evaluation of you *as a person*. Evaluations of teaching, in particular, can be perceived as evaluations of personality since "teaching is always done at the dangerous intersection of personal and public life."[12] Being evaluated can make people feel vulnerable, adding a small increment of stress to whatever load is already present.

It has been written that "Fear is fundamental to the human condition and to academic culture. We will always have our fears – but we need not be our fears."[13] In other words, don't let your preparation for any performance review govern your entire life. Remind yourself that your performance as a tenure-track faculty member is only one portion of the entire person that you are.

V. Conclusions

Before the review: After your second year in a tenure-track position, ask (or re-ask) the "right-to-know" questions noted in Table 1. Start saving documentation of your efforts as soon as possible – you may not eventually use each piece of documentation, but it will save time to have a variety of materials already assembled. Every now and then, ask yourself why you're doing what you're doing. Jot down your answers: this will start to formulate your philosophies of teaching, research, and service.

When preparing your third-year-review materials: Re-ask any applicable "right-to-know" questions. Follow the fundamental strategies presented in this paper: most importantly, follow the written and unwritten rules at your institution. Second most importantly, find mentors (ideally, both peer and established mentors) to help you. Alternatively or additionally, work to be an honest, but supportive, self-mentor with help from published guides. Treat your third-year review as a "trial run" of your application for tenure.

After the review: Now that you have a good idea of how your progress is perceived, and how you will probably be evaluated for tenure, take action. Set concrete goals to fill in the weaker areas on your resume, and to strengthen the areas that correspond most strongly to your department and institutional priorities. Be reasonable when you set these goals – they should be attainable – and kind to yourself as you work to strengthen your record before the tenure review. Finally, proactively take the initiative to become a peer mentor for the next people who will go through the third-year review process at your institution.

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APPENDIX
The following two sample graphics were designed by Glen A. Livesay, Department of Biomedical Engineering, Tulane University.

An Alternative View for Third-Year Review

Teaching

Where I am

Where I'm headed
(my goal)

Service

Research
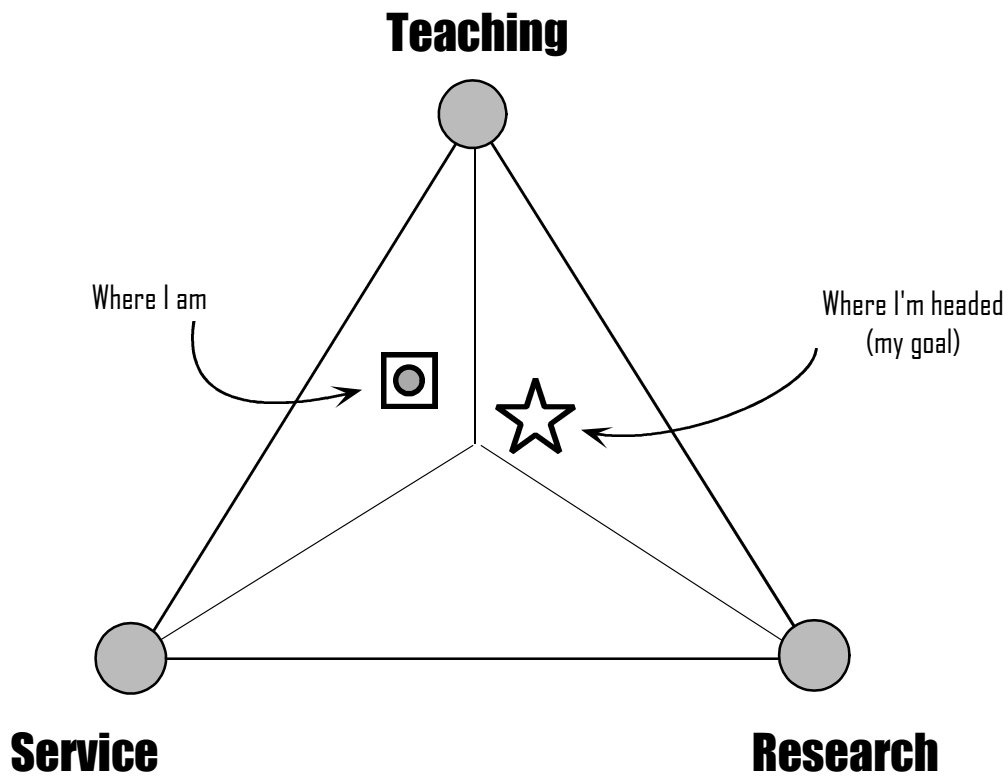
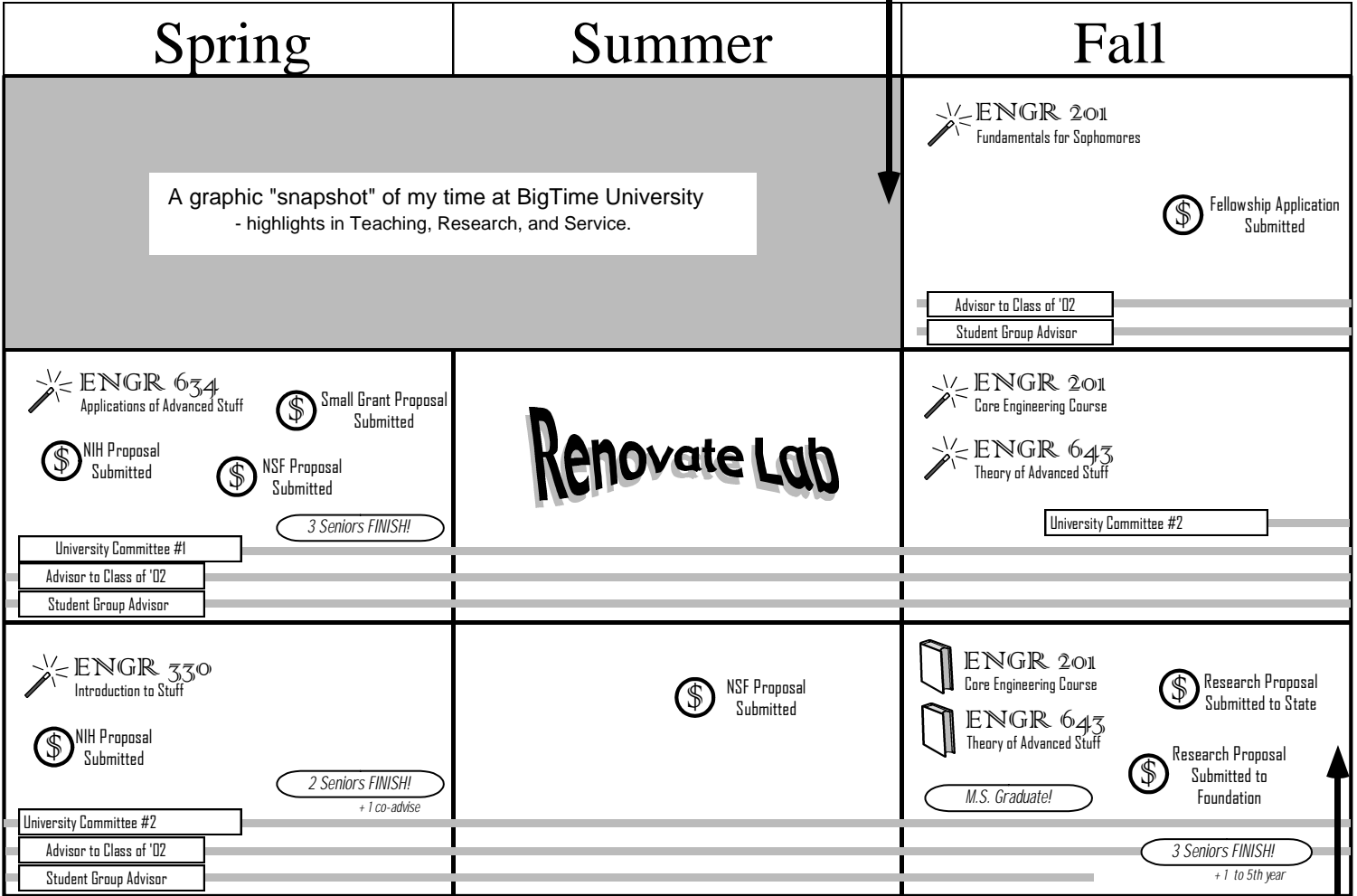**Note:** The closer you are to a vertex of the triangle, the more heavily that aspect of faculty contribution is weighted. We could certainly add some nice interpolation functions, but we don't want to obscure the graphical view.

Arrival (8/98)

	Spring	Summer	Fall
1998	A graphic "snapshot" of my time at BigTime University - highlights in Teaching, Research, and Service.		ENGR 201 Fundamentals for Sophomores $ Fellowship Application Submitted Advisor to Class of '02 Student Group Advisor
1999	ENGR 634 Applications of Advanced Stuff $ Small Grant Proposal Submitted $ NIH Proposal Submitted $ NSF Proposal Submitted *3 Seniors FINISH!* University Committee #1 Advisor to Class of '02 Student Group Advisor	Renovate Lab	ENGR 201 Core Engineering Course ENGR 643 Theory of Advanced Stuff University Committee #2
2000	ENGR 330 Introduction to Stuff $ NIH Proposal Submitted *2 Seniors FINISH!* *+ 1 co-advise* University Committee #2 Advisor to Class of '02 Student Group Advisor	$ NSF Proposal Submitted	ENGR 201 Core Engineering Course ENGR 643 Theory of Advanced Stuff *M.S. Graduate!* $ Research Proposal Submitted to State $ Research Proposal Submitted to Foundation *3 Seniors FINISH!* *+ 1 to 5th year*

Legend:
- ※ = new course developed and taught
- $ = grant submitted
- 📖 = taught course again
- ▬ Service Activity ▬

Third-year review (12/00)