

# PROMOTION:

**A discussion of 'best practices'**

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# PROMOTION

**A discussion of 'best practices'**

*mentoring developing faculty*

General outline:

**THE IMPORTANCE OF A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT**

**DIFFERING ACADEMIC NEIGHBORHOODS**

**PROMOTION**

Pre-Promotion

Promotion (to tenure)

Post-Promotion (Advancement to Full Professor)

**Departmental physiology:**

**What's wrong with homeostasis and  
negative feedback control systems**

## A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT

- Foster a faculty culture that communicates to young colleagues that they are the future of the place
- Find ways for new faculty to "own" the department
- Keeps all doors open (advice/collaboration/just plain coffee)
- Celebrate successes (papers, grants, awards, speaking invitations)
- Give new faculty a survival kit (tip sheet)
- When to meet out of the office over coffee

(This is one of Tom's slides)

## ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENTS DIFFER

- Medical Schools
  - Arts & Science Campuses
    - Natural Sciences
    - Social Sciences
  - Private/ Public
- ❖ **For promotion, one size does not fit all**
- **Different cultures**
  - **Different rules/regulations**
  - **Different expectations (e.g. about teaching)**
  - **Different means of assessment**

## PROMOTION I: Pre-Promotion

1. Make expectations clear from day one
2. Formal and informal career advising
3. Essential elements of career advice
4. The Big Three (research, teaching, service)
5. Mid-Career advice

### 1. Make expectations clear from day one

- What is Day 1?
  - At Interview
  - At Second visit (provide details)
  - When on board (provide *written* guidelines)
- Provide a written (user friendly) guideline
  - Substantive steps
  - Timing (can't do everything at once)
  - Make the guideline supportive (clear articulation of the kinds of advising the new faculty has available to her/him)
  - E.g., a one year plan, a 3 year plan, ...

(note: the term "written" is from Tom; I don't do this)

## 2. Formal and informal career advising

- **Formal advising** (whose job is this?)
  - **Mentoring committees** (who is this?)
    - Meet regularly (at least once/year)
    - Available any time
- **Informal advising** (junior faculty need to feel comfortable with this!!)
  - **Advising is not one-stop-shopping** (but who do they turn to?)
    - Teaching
    - Research
    - Writing (grants/papers)
    - Work/family issues
    - Departmental/university citizenship
    - Moral support

## 3. Essential elements of career advice

Boils down to expectations!! What are they and how do you go about exceeding them

and

Saying "yes" and "no" to the correct things

## Special issues of tenure clock:

- Different at different places
- Tied to promotion to associate professor?
- Pauses in clock?
- Move in and out of tenure stream?

## 4. THE BIG THREE

- SCHOLARSHIP
- TEACHING
- SERVICE

## SCHOLARSHIP

- publication quality vs quantity issue
  - What is a "top-tier" journal in your field
  - Balance of quality and quantity
- start publishing early
  - Let the field know you're at a new place and are on your own
  - Stake claim to some turf
  - It's more important to get that first paper than to make it super-substantial
- Encourage exposure (e.g., SfN, Gordon Conferences). Advertise your new colleagues every chance you get.
- Issue of publishing with previous Phd/Postdoc advisors
  - Avoid at all costs?
  - The "line" on your CV that tenure reviewers will draw

## ... more SCHOLARSHIP

- The dual-edge sword of collaboration
  - Pluses: broadens impact, increases productivity
  - Minuses: the question of independence
    - don't be someone else's "technician"
    - Make sure your contribution is clear and distinct BEFORE you begin
- Publish at a steady pace: avoid "scalping" as a run-up to tenure
- Don't give up too easily on a paper/grant (i.e., how to read and respond to reviews)
  - "No" does not always mean "no" (the notion of a "soft reject")
  - The art of responding to reviewers of grants and papers
  - "In this game you don't just need a strong mind. You need a strong stomach"

(another of Tom's slides)

## TEACHING

- **Attitude - quality teaching is important!!**
- The importance of getting help and advice (from multiple sources)
  - Don't assume you know how
  - Use departmental resources (advisors, invite a colleague to sit in)
  - Use campus resources
  - Go watch a good teacher
  - The first time is the hardest (and most time consuming)
- Possibility of teaching relief (e.g. in the first year)
- Try to establish courses that you "own"
- What are the expectations regarding teaching and promotion

## SERVICE

- **Within the Department**
  - Try to find a learning experience for new faculty (e.g. a committee on which that they can learn policies/procedures)
  - Have the chairs of those committees see themselves as mentors to new faculty
  - Start out light
- **University-wide**
  - Avoid early over-commitment
  - But take the opportunity to become known outside your department (e.g. at the School level, or the University level)
  - The importance of balance



## MID-WAY to TENURE EVALUATION

- Should be a formal evaluation
  - Some places mandatory
  - Who's at the table during discussion of a candidate's mid-career status (the value of young faculty learning by seeing how other mid-career colleagues are evaluated)
- Should be supportive but candid
- Steps for improvement should be clearly spelled out (in writing)
  - Point out areas that need improvement
  - Provide clear steps to implement that improvement
- The importance of follow-up
  - Set a time line
  - Meet regularly after mid-career evaluation (at least twice/year)
  - *There should be no surprises*

(another of Tom's slides)

## II. Promotion to tenure

- Preparing the file
  - Look at previous files (both successful and not successful)
- Choosing outside reviewers
  - The candidates list
  - The Committee's complementary list
- Seeking advice
  - Talk to the Chair
  - Talk to all advisors/mentors/other faculty who have recently gone through the process

## Promotion to tenure, continued

- Who's at the table?
  - Some places (my Dept) have all faculty sit in on a tenure discussion
  - Listen to the committee report and subsequent discussion
  - Extremely valuable learning experience (demystifies the process)
- Going up early
  - Strong case: go for it. Up side: increased rank, stature, salary.
  - If case could be stronger (often the case) wait
  - Risks:
    - The problem of repeated requests for outside letters
    - The psychological impact of a deferral or turn-down

(another of Tom's slides)

## III. Promotion to Full Professor

- After tenure
  - Now go on study section
  - Now accept more professional responsibility (e.g. in Scholarly societies, on Editorial boards, etc)
  - Now become a more engaged University citizen (serve on task-forces, Academic senates, etc)
- Going to full professor
  - Learn the local culture of promotion
  - Continue to seek advice from all who were helpful in the pre-tenure years

The bottom line:

1. Careers never stop developing
2. Be aware of expectations - both what others expect of you and what you expect of yourself
3. Everyone benefits from advice at all career stages
4. Life-long process of being mentored and being a mentor