

The Tenure Challenge

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(and many speakers from years past)

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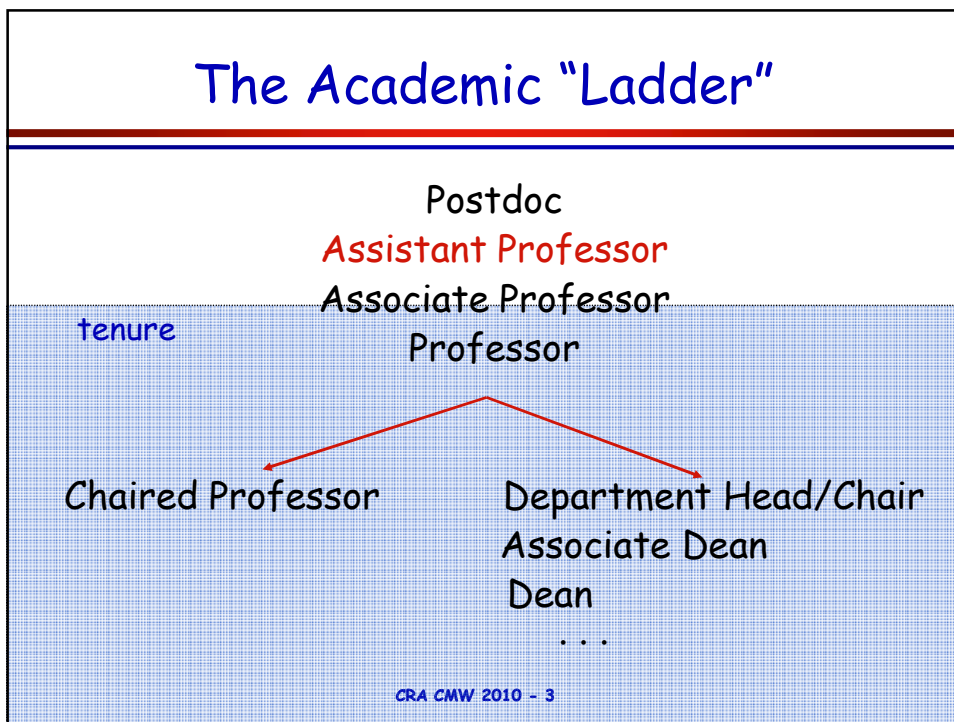
Tenure

"a status granted after a trial period to a teacher protecting him from summary dismissal" Webster's

- Tenure is a long term commitment by the institution and is not taken lightly
 - » A "club" with lifetime membership
 - » tenure & promotion happen generally at the same time
- ~70% of CS/CE "regular" faculty at PhD granting institutions are tenured (as reported by CRA)
 - » ~60% of all female and ~72% of male faculty are tenured

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The Academic "Ladder"



Example of a Research Faculty Career



Tenure Process (1)

Usually a six year "clock"

- typical example...
 - » Yearly **written** evaluations by Dept. Personnel Committee and Dept. Head
 - Head meets with faculty member
 - » Mid-tenure review by Dept. Personnel Committee and Dept. Head
 - Can include Dean and School Personnel Committee
 - Some institutions do an internal evaluation
 - Some do an external evaluation and request ~3-6 external letters

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Tenure Process (2)

Usually a six year "clock"

- » Sixth year promotion and tenure review
 - **Process generally starts end of fifth year**
 - ~8-20 external letters
 - In some institutions, the candidate can provide a list of names (not all will be selected)
 - Candidate's involvement and expectation of involvement in preparation of the documents varies

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Primary Criteria: what matters?

- Evidence of scholarly distinction, accomplishment and impact in your field
 - » coherent body of important work
 - » significant theme showing growth as a scholar
 - » sufficient productivity to show promise for sustained productivity
 - » respect by acknowledged experts
- Different fields and different universities have different cultures
 - » how do publication patterns affect expectations?
 - » how is collaboration assessed?
 - » how is interdisciplinary work assessed and viewed?
 - » how is impact measured?

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Tenure "Rules"

- Find out local expectations: the rules and culture at your institution
 - » read the published tenure guidelines
- Figure out which academic level is the "real" filter
- Don't forget the "external expectations"
- Beware: expectations may change and you might get different advice from different people
 - » Best advice comes from department chair and senior faculty who serve(d) on tenure/promotion committee(s)

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No Substitute for Quality

- Basic factors

- » excellence in research
- » excellence in teaching
- » excellence in service

} *importance depends on institution*

- How can you do it all?

- » Concentrate on what's important in your local context
- » Whatever that is, don't be a bad teacher
- » Perform limited, but reliable service (service to the university and service to profession)

... *perceptions count*

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Local Expectations

- Research

- » How many and what kind of papers are expected?
- » How much grant support is expected?
- » How is support from industry viewed?
- » How is [interdisciplinary] collaboration viewed?
- » Is your research area viewed favorably?

- Teaching

- » What do faculty expect of students?
- » What do students expect from faculty?
- » What do colleagues expect from your course?

- Service

- » How much service is really required?
- » Is the emphasis on professional or departmental service?

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Research

- Articulate your research goals/plan -
 - » update it regularly
- Establish (some) research independence
 - » from your PhD advisor and also from colleagues
 - » if coauthors can not be external evaluators, be careful with wide-ranging collaboration
- Keep your field narrow enough to focus, but not so narrow as to be inconsequential
- Produce evidence of impact

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Publications

- **Quality** before quantity in publications
- Journal publications
 - » Understand the importance of publishing in referred journals
 - » Understand journal rankings in your field and related fields that you publish in
 - » Track special issues for faster turnaround
- Conferences and workshops
 - » Be visible and well-respected
 - » Understand conference/workshop rankings
 - » Keep track of acceptance rates
- Read reviews, revise and resubmit those rejected papers worth salvaging

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Research Advising

- Recruit good graduate students (that fit your goals)
 - » Balance PhD and MS students
 - Try to graduate at least one PhD by year six
 - Don't take on too many terminal MS students
 - » Offer grad level reading courses (as overload, if necessary)
 - » Use start-up RA and equipment monies wisely
 - » Learn when and how to say "no"
 - A bad student is worse than no student
 - See them "in action" first (in class, trial project)

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Funding (1)

- Target funding opportunities
 - » Visit funding agency sites
 - Join an experienced faculty
 - Get on funding opportunities mail lists
 - » NSF/ONR/ARL CAREER competitions
 - borrow sample proposals from successful colleagues
 - » Agree to serve on NSF review panels
 - » Other career development award possibilities (industry, university)

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Funding (2)

- Ask successful colleagues to review your proposal outline and then to read your proposal
 - » Listen to their feedback
 - » You may get contradicting feedback
- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again
 - » Call up the program officer after a proposal was rejected

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Fundamental basis for academic success is **IMPACT**

- Much of computer science is experimental
- Impact can be evaluated in many ways
 - » journal publication
 - » conference publication
 - » Citations
 - » Grant support
 - » artifact creation
 - » technology transition
 - » effect on standards
 - » even hits on the web

*document
importance*

*... your colleagues and the P&T committee
must be convinced of impact*

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Service

- Find out what/how much service really counts
 - » to the department, to the school/college, to the University, to the profession, to you
- Learn when/how/why to say no
- **Quality** and **reliability** are more important than quantity
- Do what's visible and will bring respect
 - » from your research community
 - » from your campus and department "elders"

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Service Portfolio (1)

- Ask for beneficial service
 - » colloquia chair (in 4th, 5th year)
 - » graduate admissions
 - » link your service to your research
 - » do things you enjoy
- Become known for being a good reviewer
 - » quality reviews, done on time

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Service Portfolio (2)

- Become active in professional societies and conference activities
 - » speak-up at program committee meetings, defend your position but don't be obstinate
 - » First get involved with workshops, move up to major conferences
- Be careful with your time
 - » Be selective

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Teaching (1)

- Articulate your teaching goals/plan
 - » write it down
 - » update it regularly
- Learn when/how/why to say *no*
- Negotiate for release from teaching
 - » As part of start-up package, for developing new courses and labs
- Don't mess up in a big way

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Teaching (2)

- Shoot for **good perceptions** - positive evaluations
 - » Be available, but be careful of your time
 - be on time and don't end early
 - keep regular office hours
 - » Don't be too hard **or** too easy
 - good learning is not necessarily *hard* learning
 - » Communicate with students
 - explain your expectations and set reasonable boundaries for their expectations.
 - » Don't do evaluations right after an exam

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Teaching Portfolio (1)

- Teach a blend of courses
 - » small/large, required/elected, undergrad/grad, seminars
- Don't teach too many different courses
 - » Teaching a new course has a high start-up cost
 - » Invest your time in developing a good set of notes
 - » Teaching a course repeatedly makes you a better teacher
- Teach graduate courses in your area
 - » graduate courses may promote your research
- Don't do **too much** curriculum development

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Teaching Portfolio (2)

- Find help
 - » Take advantage of campus programs on teaching
 - » Ask colleagues for help - share material
 - » Know how previous instances of the course were taught
 - » Use texts that provide support material (e.g., slides)
- Set up your "kudos" file and keep it up-to-date
- Request a peer evaluation
 - » don't depend solely on student evaluations

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Dossier Preparation

- Long CV
- Research statement- 3-5 pages long
- Teaching statement - 1-2 pages long
- Up-to-date web page
- Teaching Evaluations
- Letters of Recommendations
- Assessment of your case
 - » Department personnel committee
 - » Department chair
 - » College and Dean

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Dossier Preparation

- Long CV
 - » List everything only once and carefully
 - » Education, Employment history
 - » Publications (books, book chapters, journals, conferences (with acceptance rates), workshops)
 - » Awards, Recognitions
 - » External Funding
 - » Service to Profession
 - » Service to Department (College, University)
 - » Seminars given, Classes taught
 - » Students supervised/graduated (awards, committees)

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Research Statement

- Your chance to tell your story
 - » Explain what is hard, interesting, and exciting about your work
 - » Highlight your best work
 - » Show how your past results have impacted your current research direction
 - Show relationships among your different research thrusts
 - » Show that you have a coherent, long-term research plan
 - » Pitch it for the audience
- Have several savvy faculty members read your statement and listen to their advice

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External Evaluators

- External letter writers
 - » Some selected by you
 - » Some selected by your department
 - Can usually black list one or two people-- but do so carefully
- Can informally suggest names or venues
 - » Program committee from major conferences
- Some departments exclude/include:
 - Thesis advisor, post-doc advisor
 - Co-authors and collaborators

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External Evaluators

- Your selected letter writers
 - » Number of people you suggest depends on department
 - Don't provide more names than requested, since your names are marked as devalued
 - Make sure they are supportive
 - » Department will ask only **some** of the evaluators from your list
 - » OK to ask someone if you can recommend them as a letter writer
 - Watch their body language--few people say "no" outright

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External Letter Writers

- Make a list of potential candidates
 - » knowledgeable in your research area(s)
 - » from the senior ranks
 - » from schools ranked equal or above yours
- Try to meet the candidates on this list
 - » Talk to them at conferences
 - » Invite them to give a colloquium
 - » Interact with them at program committee meetings
 - » Visit them during your "pre-tenure" tour

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Overall Advice

- The most important thing is to enjoy the work you do
 - » Keeping in mind the milestones you need to reach to be successful at what you do
- Strike a balance between your family and social life and your career
 - » Don't be consumed by the process
 - » Know if family events (e.g., birth of a child) can impact your tenure clock
- Some institutions have ways to stop the tenure clock
- Above all, remember that there is life out there with OR without tenure

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Questions that may not have a simple answer

- My record is above that of other assistant professors. It is a good idea to pursue an early promotion?
- How can cultural differences in writing letters of recommendation impact a tenure case?
- After my Ph.D. I spent 3 years as an "Assistant" at University X in Europe. How is this factored into the time when I come up for tenure?
- I have some concerns. Is it a good idea to ask for advice at my institution outside your department?
- Can one come up again in the final year after a negative tenure decision?
- Under what circumstances would pursuing a grievance be warranted?

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Dos and Don'ts

- Do become someone other faculty want as a colleague
- Do make a good first (and lasting) impression
- Do be a team player
- Do get to know leaders in your field
- Do take criticism/feedback/complaints seriously
- Do find mentors
- Do get along well with staff
- Do keep records
- Do choose your battles wisely
- Don't let your research get off to a slow start
- Don't be labeled as a bad teacher
- Don't be viewed as unsupportive of department goals
- Don't do anything weird, irregular, or unethical
- Don't brown-nose or be insincere
- Don't make enemies, but speak up

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Good luck!

QUESTIONS?

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