THE ESSENTIAL COLLEGE PROFESSOR

A Practical Guide to an Academic Career

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WHAT KIND OF PROFESSOR ARE YOU?

One of the most interesting aspects of culture can be seen when we observe how members of different societies identify themselves. For instance, in response to the request “Tell me a little bit about yourself,” many Americans tend to respond in terms of their professions. In other parts of the world, it is more common for people to identify themselves by their heritage, the region in which they live, their religious background, or a few important details about their families. Only secondarily do people in many cultures think that what they do for a living determines who they are. Moreover, as American academics, many of us carry this tendency to view ourselves in terms of our profession even further, identifying ourselves not merely as college professors, but also as historians, American historians, American Civil War historians, or even American Civil War economic historians. In other words, readers of this book may find that their natural tendency is to define themselves wholly in terms of their academic disciplines, overlooking at times many of the other key ingredients that constitute their identities and even their professional lives. This practice can be quite limiting, because knowing who you are outside of your academic field is a critical first step in developing a plan to advance your career. For instance, the strategy that we’ll develop in Chapter 4, “Career Planning for College Professors,” can be seen as similar to drawing a map that will lead you to a further destination. But for any map to be useful, you have to know where you are starting from. In the same way, if don’t understand who you are now, it will be much more difficult for you to become who you want to be five or ten years from now. So, before we begin to develop your career plan, ask yourself: What kind of professor are you? What are your values, hopes, and dreams? What are your strengths and weaknesses? Which activities do you find so unpleasant that you couldn’t engage in them regardless of any benefits that may result? What makes you happy? What seems to annoy you more than it does other people? What caused you to seek an academic profession in the first place? What legacy do you hope to leave behind? Keep in mind that there is no one correct answer to any of these questions. The professoriate is a “tent” that is big enough to include people of all types and inclinations. But you need to be honest with yourself about what motivates you in order to pursue your goals most effectively. To do that, it is helpful to conduct a short, informal inventory.

What follows are twenty-six activities that are commonly performed by college professors. Many of them are mundane or routine tasks, but they all relate to the real work that faculty members are expected to perform. You can approach the inventory in several different ways. The easiest way is simply to read over the twenty-six items and to note those activities that interest you more than others or those that you would find particularly unpleasant. A more detailed approach, which can give you more surprising results, is to place the entire list in order of preference. In other words, take a sheet of paper, number it 1 through 26, and then place the items in the order that you find them most interesting, appealing, and exciting (or, if few of them intrigue you, how you find them least uninteresting, unappealing, and unexciting). No one else will see your results, so be absolutely candid. Don’t respond according to how you think you “should” feel or how others might expect you to feel. If you believe that a particular activity is something that “every good professor is supposed to value highly,” but you find it unappealing or dread doing it, then place that activity low on your list. If there is an item that you’re afraid most other professors would regard as trivial or a distraction from their “real work,” but you enjoy doing it, place it high on your list. You are unlikely to order these items in precisely the same way as any other professor, so don’t worry about what others may say or believe. The whole purpose of this inventory is to find out what makes you distinctive as a college professor.

The activities that you should rank from 1 (“most appealing or least unappealing”) to 26 (“most unappealing or least appealing”) are:

A. Receiving a course release to conduct a scholarly project that will cause you to spend much of your time alone in the lab, library, or studio.
B. Answering a telephone call from a parent who is seriously concerned about how his or her child is doing in your course.
C. Being the “point person” selected by your department to present a new and highly controversial curriculum proposal before a meeting of the institution’s entire faculty.
D. Meeting one-on-one with a student to conduct an independent study, directed inquiry, or thesis preparation.
E. Revising a course that you have already taught several times in order to make it more effective.

F. Completing a report that summarizes assessment data for your entire academic department.

G. Being appointed to a committee that meets quite often but conducts what you regard as extremely important work for the department and institution.

H. Being invited at the last minute to answer a few questions about your program's curriculum by the board of trustees. You understand the department's curriculum rather well, but you do not have time to prepare specifically for this meeting.

I. Devoting a year or more to an interdisciplinary work of scholarship that, although somewhat related to your discipline, does not fall within the traditional confines of that discipline.

J. Teaching a three-hundred-person introductory course in your discipline.

K. Serving as the person responsible for planning celebrations whenever a faculty member in your discipline is promoted, receives tenure, or has a major work accepted for publication.

L. Being listed as third author on a publication for which the first two authors are highly respected members of your discipline.

M. Coauthoring a work of scholarship or creative activity with a student.

N. Meeting one-on-one with your dean, provost, or president to discuss a topic that is not revealed to you until the meeting.

O. Beginning the initial preparation for an innovative curriculum proposal that will not be completed for several years.

P. Teaching an upper-level seminar or graduate course in your discipline.

Q. Working on a project that applies your discipline to real-world situations and helps improve the lives of others without cost to them.

R. Reading an interesting book in your discipline—alone in your office with the door closed.

S. Giving some quick and spontaneous advice to a colleague who has reached an impasse in his or her own research.

T. Tutoring a student who is having difficulty in one of your courses.

U. Being elected to a four-year term on a committee that will radically revise the general education requirements of your institution.

V. Organizing your receipts so that you can be reimbursed for travel expenses related to your scholarship.

W. Serving as the departmental representative on a panel that answers questions parents may have about their children's academic experience at your institution.

X. Writing a solo article that explains a truly innovative idea you have developed in your discipline.

Y. Advising a student regarding which courses to take next term in order to graduate in a timely manner.

Z. Providing an overview of recent developments in your discipline to an alumni gathering.

No matter which method you used to prepare your inventory, you should now have a good idea of your preference regarding certain activities commonly performed by college professors. If you simply noted the ones you particularly like or dislike, go over those two lists. If you ranked all twenty-six activities, focus on the top five and the bottom five. See if your lists run parallel to any of the following. Table 3.1 provides an overview of how the activities sort into different categories.

- Activities related to teaching (items B, C, D, E, J, O, P, and T), scholarship (items A, I, L, M, S, V, and X), or service (items F, G, H, K, Q, U, W, Y, and Z). Nearly all college professors are expected to devote their time to all components of the "academic triad" or "the three legs of the academic stool," as teaching, scholarship, and service are often called. However, it is not at all uncommon for faculty members to have a strong preference for one of these three activities or a relative aversion to one of them. If this is the case for you, then you are in possession of valuable information about yourself. Knowing your preference in this area may help you to tailor a job search more exclusively to your interests; if your top five preferences all included items related to scholarship, for instance, you may well not be happy working at an institution that prides itself on "placing teaching first." Furthermore, if you are an untenured junior faculty member whose top five preferences all were items related to service, you may need to counterbalance this tendency as in matters of tenure and promotion, most institutions weight excellence in teaching and research far more heavily than they do excellence in service. If tenure and promotion are no longer concerns for you, then discovering that you place a strong priority on teaching, scholarship, or service can help define
| Z | A | X | M | A | N | S | R | Q | P | O | N | W | L | K | J | H | G | F | E | D | C | B | A |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Teaching |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Scholarship |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Service |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Independent Work |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Collaborative Work |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Student Centered |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Faculty Centered |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Scholarship of Discovery |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Integration |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Application |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Detail Oriented |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Big-Picture Oriented |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Large Groups |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Small Groups, Individuals |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Planning |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Improvisation |

Table 3.1: College Professor Inventory
your priorities for the next phase of your career: you can begin to develop an identity as “the program’s most highly regarded teacher” or “our area’s most widely published scholar.” That identity can be extremely useful for establishing new goals—even a wholly new professional reputation—for yourself.

- Activities that involve independent work (items A, B, C, E, F, H, R, V, X, and Z) or collaborative work (items D, G, I, O, P, S, U, and W). Knowing whether you prefer working alone or as a member of a team is an important aspect of determining what kind of professor you are. If you gravitate toward group projects, then you can build on this preference to explore the development of team-taught courses, collaborative research efforts, and group service projects. If you prefer working on your own, then you might seek out such teaching opportunities as online courses and distance learning courses, which may give you greater independence in your instruction. In a similar way, you may wish to identify further examples of research projects and service activities that allow you to work on your own and at your own pace. Even when you are assigned to a committee or task force, you may also wish to explore the type of assignments (such as preparing drafts of proposals or collecting examples of best practices) at which you can excel independently.

- Activities that are student centered (items B, D, E, J, M, P, T, U, W, and Y) or faculty centered (items A, F, G, K, L, R, S, V, and X). Institutions so often state that they are “focused on the needs of the students first” that faculty members frequently adopt this rhetoric regardless of what their actual feelings on the matter may be. When you ask yourself candidly why you are pursuing an academic profession, which takes priority for you: training the next generation of scholars in your discipline or having the privilege of working with the ideas and concepts of your discipline? If you discover that you truly are student centered, then this information will guide you as you seek committee assignments and make requests for the courses that you will teach. If you find that you really focus more on the needs of faculty members in your discipline, such as the ability to conduct innovative research and to develop new theories, then this insight, too, will guide you in the choices you make.

- Activities that involve the scholarship of discovery (items A, L, P, R, and X), integration (items C, I, O, U, and Z), or application (items D, F, Q, T, and Y). In 1990, Ernest Boyer made an important contribution to the way in which research, scholarship, and creative activity were viewed by colleges and universities. In his book Scholarship Reconsidered, Boyer concluded that the traditional way in which scholarship had been viewed by the academy (that is, as research) was only one of several legitimate forms that scholarship could take. In addition to this “Scholarship of Discovery,” as Boyer called research that introduced new ideas and theories, he also identified what he called the “Scholarship of Integration” (the relationship of existing ideas to one another, including such pursuits as interdisciplinary studies) and the “Scholarship of Application” (through which developments in a discipline are used to solve a practical problem or to produce a tangible benefit). Boyer’s fourth category, which he called the “Scholarship of Teaching,” where advances are made in the pedagogy of a discipline, will be addressed in Chapter 28, “Alternative Forms of Scholarship.” Being conscious of the type of scholarship toward which you gravitate as a college professor will help you both characterize and defend that approach to scholarship more persuasively. For instance, suppose you are performing a new and highly innovative type of scholarship but face tenure, promotion, or post-tenure review by a committee that consists primarily of professors who have been engaged in independent research. Your own thorough understanding of the type of research you do can help you explain it more clearly to committee members who may only be familiar with other forms of the Scholarship of Integration or Application. In addition, reflecting on your research can help you in the future by leading you to new topics, forms, or directions in which to take your ongoing scholarly activity.

- Activities that are detail oriented (items B, E, F, K, T, V, W, and Y) or big-picture oriented (items C, O, U, and X). Some faculty members are more attracted to activities that allow them to take a more global view of their research, curricular development, and the like, while others prefer to work out the details of implementing these ideas. The academic environment is not merely a matter of seeing either the forest or the trees; for any academic unit to function effectively, there is a need for individuals with both of these complementary talents. If you discover that you have a strong preference for either handling the specific facets of a plan that will make it more successful or developing a more visionary and overarching theme, but without much interest in the specific steps leading to implementation, then this is valuable insight into the sort of role that you might seek to play in your discipline. If you find that you are detail oriented, seek out opportunities
where you help implement curricular revisions, improve course rotations, gather and analyze data, write budget proposals, and prepare the information needed in departmental reports. If you find that you are more big-picture oriented, become involved in your institution’s strategic planning efforts or serve as a faculty representative to your governing board.

- Activities that involve interaction with large groups (items C, H, J, U, W, and Z) or small groups and individuals (items B, D, G, I, M, N, P, S, T, and Y). Some professors feel comfortable working with groups of any size, and they are equally effective no matter how many people are present. Others find that they are more effective in one type of setting or another. For certain professors, addressing large groups is a perfectly comfortable activity; they feel that they are “on stage” in these situations and that a safe distance separates them from the audience. These same people may feel awkward or even tongue-tied when called on to make casual conversation with a small number of people. Other professors are at their best working one-on-one with students or in small seminars, but are far less effective when addressing large numbers of students in an auditorium. You may not always be able to control the environments in which you are called on to speak or teach, but knowing your natural inclination in this regard can aid you in which sorts of courses to request, which types of committee assignments to pursue, and which kinds of venues to present your research.

- Activities that require planning (items A, E, F, G, I, K, O, and U) or improvisation (items B, C, H, N, S, W, and Y). You may prefer to engage in activities in which you spend long periods of time preparing your ideas before you ever “go public” with them. Alternatively, you may enjoy the impromptu give-and-take that occurs in situations requiring more spontaneity. Being conscious of this preference will help you in every aspect of your professional life. It will guide you as you develop your courses (if you crave detailed planning, how can you plan “spontaneous” discussions in your courses, and if you thrive on spontaneity, how do you help the student succeed who requires a great deal of structure and predictability?), and as you conduct your research (if you have a choice between reading a formal paper or participating in a poster session or panel discussion, which would you choose?). It can even assist you with choosing appropriate areas in which to contribute service based on the operating procedures of the various committees available to you.

There are probably as many kinds of college professors as there are kinds of people. Different personalities will flourish in one type of academic environment, but feel frustrated or stifled in another. By knowing the type of professor you are, you stand a much better chance of being satisfied in your professional environment and of serving both your students and colleagues extremely well. It will also provide a wonderful starting point for helping you become the type of professor that you ultimately want to be.

REFERENCES


RESOURCES


Most college professors begin their professional lives with only a vague idea about how their careers may develop. Unless they are familiar with academic life because a member of their family taught at a college or university, they are frequently unaware of the options that are open to them, the choices they'll need to make, and the different directions their professional lives could take. They may see themselves as simply accepting a position that they are offered, moving up through the ranks, and remaining at that same institution for their entire careers. Indeed, many faculty members follow exactly that path, and it can be a very satisfying and rewarding way in which to spend one's professional life. But there are also other opportunities that faculty members may wish to consider—not to mention occasional side routes that deviate from, then reconverge with, their main routes—before they choose any one particular path. All faculty members need, in other words, to do some very basic career planning.

Career planning for college professors involves determining which professional goals are most meaningful to you and then developing a strategy to attain those goals. It does not mean that every detail of your unfolding career will be determined in advance and that you will then be committed to moving lockstep through an inflexible program. On the contrary, a good career plan provides plenty of chances for serendipity. After all, there may be fellowship programs available to you a decade from now that have not even been created yet. Your academic discipline might develop in a dramatic new direction over the course of your career. You may discover new professional interests, or innovations in technology may completely transform the way in which you teach or do research. You can't plan for every eventuality. But what you can do is set yourself some basic career goals and then create an environment in which you will be most likely to fulfill at least some of them. In other words, simply because you can't (and shouldn't) plan for everything, it doesn't mean that you shouldn't plan for anything. Whether you realize it or not, career planning for college professors begins the very moment you have been offered a faculty contract and are considering whether to accept it.

**Negotiating a Contract**

When an institution offers you a contract as the result of a national search and on-campus interview, the relationship that you have with that institution changes dramatically. Until this moment, you have been trying to persuade them to accept you. During contract negotiations, they are trying to persuade you to accept them. This shift in the relationship is significant, but don't let this altered status go to your head. The institution is likely to have a backup plan with a second- or third-choice candidate already in mind in case you don't accept the position. Moreover, academic institutions rarely have the sort of negotiating flexibility found in large corporations; most of the time, colleges and universities make their first offer very close to the maximum salary they can afford. In other words, if you demand too much, the institution is likely to lose its enthusiasm for you very quickly and rescind their offer. But if you accept the first offer you are made, you may be doing yourself a disservice in terms of your overall career plan. So, before you agree to the contract that has been offered, refuse it, or make a counteroffer, ask yourself the following question: What are the most important things that I want out of my professional life? How you answer that question will help you determine how you can best negotiate the offer you have received. As an illustration, let's consider your possibilities from several different perspectives.

- **Salary.** As we've seen, most colleges and universities tend to make their offers to candidates at near the maximum of what has been budgeted for the position. Though there may be some negotiating room for the chair or dean, it is unlikely to be very much. If you feel that the salary offer is insufficient for your needs, you can always counteroffer, but you should be aware that, if the institution increases its offer at all, it is likely to do so only very slightly. If you are convinced that you need (or are worth) 50 percent more than what the institution has offered, then there is almost certainly no chance that you will reach a salary figure that is acceptable to both of you. Even a counteroffer that is 20 to 25 percent higher than the original offer may well cause the institution to conclude either that you are out of their price range or that you have an inflated sense of your worth. As a general rule of thumb, most successful counteroffers are in the range of roughly 10 percent over what the institution has offered.
In other words, if you are offered a salary of $50,000, a counteroffer of $55,000 would not be viewed as unreasonable by most institutions. For other salary figures, round your counteroffer to a reasonable amount in the range of 10 percent or less. For instance, if you are offered a salary of $60,000, requesting $66,000 might seem like an unusual amount; you could safely request $65,000 or, if the institution seems to be adequately funded, you could possibly stretch your request to $67,500. But going much beyond this figure, such as asking for $70,000, will probably seem far too high to the institution and may cause them to decide not to increase their initial offer at all. In addition, even if you make a counteroffer of 10 percent or less, don't be surprised when the institution tells you that it cannot raise its initial figure at all or can do so by only a very small amount. They may be negotiating in good faith at the very limit of what is available to them.

In making your counteroffer, you must, of course, be cordial and respectful at all times; you don't want your future boss's first impression of you to be that of an egomaniac. Say something like, "Oh, I was hoping for something a little higher than that because of my student loan payments" (or "because my spouse hasn't yet found a job") or "because I need to support my parents" or "because the cost of living is so much higher in your area than what I am used to" or whatever your reason is for needing a higher income). "Did you have a specific figure in mind?" the chair or dean might ask. That's when you can say, "Well, I was thinking something more along the lines of..." and state your counteroffer. The person's response may be, "I'm sorry, but the figure I mentioned is the best we can do" or the person may immediately either meet your figure or suggest an amount somewhere between the two figures. More commonly, however, the person will say that he or she needs to determine whether the offer can be revised and that you'll receive another call later. All this means is that the caller needs to check with someone, either his or her supervisor or a budget director, to see whether it is financially possible to make an increase to the offer and if so, by how much. If the institution meets your counteroffer, it is never acceptable to try to negotiate for a still higher salary. When your counteroffer is met, you really only have two options: either accept the offer that is now on the table or refuse it on grounds other than salary. ("I've been talking this matter over with my spouse, and we've decided that, despite your very generous offer, we simply don't wish to relocate at this time. I'm going to focus on positions closer to my home.") Being professional and responsible while negotiating a contract is an important part of your career planning. After all, even if you decide to reject an offer, you don't want to leave the institution with a bad impression of you. As we've seen, higher education is a very small world, and how you treat one institution can easily come back to haunt you later. For this reason, individuals who sign contracts and then fail to honor them often discover that this action hurts their careers when they least expect it.

**Start-up funds.** Start-up funds are the one-time investment that an institution makes in order to assist you with the continued progress of your scholarship and teaching. In such fields as the natural sciences, engineering, and health care, start-up funds can be substantial, possibly involving, at larger research institutions, the creation of a full laboratory or another facility. In many fields, however, start-up funds consist of nothing more than the purchase of a computer or the reallocation of existing equipment and the assignment of an office. What you should ask yourself before signing a contract is, "What sort of initial investment will I absolutely need to continue my work as effectively as possible from the starting date of the position?" State your needs as a request to be added to the original contract. Again, don't be surprised if your request cannot be met or can only be addressed in part. Certain schools, particularly smaller private colleges, do not have the budgetary flexibility needed to provide significant start-up funds to new faculty members. But even if your request cannot be granted, stating your needs could cause the institution to explore whether they might address your concerns in some other fashion. For instance, the institution might allow you to begin applying for access to its internal research funds even before the starting date of your contract. It could lend the support of its Office of Research and Sponsored Programs in helping you apply for external funding. It could partner with other institutions in a consortium to provide you with access to necessary equipment at a nearby campus. Be flexible in considering the institution's response to your request. It is almost certainly trying to find a way to meet your needs while working within the constraints of its fiscal reality.

**Moving expenses.** Some institutions always allocate a certain amount to new faculty members for moving expenses. Other institutions are prohibited from funding moving expenses at all. Still others will only cover a portion of moving expenses if you negotiate it into your original contract. It is always appropriate to ask what the institution's policy on moving expenses happens to be. Try to be precise in your questions: In addition to the costs associated with the transportation of furniture, can the institution also cover the costs of packing and unpacking? Can they reimburse you for meals and mileage expenses?
while you are in transit? Can they cover the cost of transporting office equipment and laboratory items in addition to your household furnishings? Even in cases where the institution is prohibited by its policies from covering your relocation costs directly, they may be able to compensate you for an expensive move in some other way. For example, they may be willing to increase their salary offer slightly so that your moving expenses are covered within your first three years. Or they may be able to hire you for a consultancy, bringing you in for a few days before the start of the official contract and paying you a stipend sufficiently large to defray at least part of your moving expenses. If no other alternative is possible, either the institution or its foundation may be able to loan you the cost of your move, which you will then repay—at low or perhaps even no interest—over an extended period via payroll deduction. Finally, if the institution is private, they may even have access to vehicles and employees who can assist with your move. Here again, the institution’s response to your need may well be creative, but it is unlikely to explore these possibilities if you do not inquire about them.

Special benefits. At times the most important thing to you might be not an increase in salary per se, but some less tangible factor that will make your life better. Institutionally subsidized day-care centers, flexible working hours, the ability to continue your education, assistance with spousal employment, tuition remission for dependents, workload adjustments, opportunities for advancement, and help in securing affordable housing are all special benefits that may matter more to you than salary alone. Be clear about indicating the challenges that you face because of your special circumstances and allow the institution to develop creative ways of meeting your needs. Remember that a salary that is $5,000 lower than what is offered by another institution may be worth far more in the long run if it includes the equivalent of $30,000 a year in tuition remission to one of your dependents, a lighter teaching load, and a less stressful pathway to promotion and tenure. If your family is reluctant to make the move, inquire about a second visit to the institution—this time including your spouse and children—so that they may all experience where their new home will be. Each prospective faculty member has an individual set of needs and personal circumstances; institutions can often be quite flexible in addressing those needs.

Plotting a Career Trajectory

Once you have accepted a contract and are working at an institution, it is time to begin plotting the future course of your professional life. If you don't occasionally give some thought to where you may be going, you could easily look backwards in ten to twenty years and discover that you have not gone anywhere at all. For some people, that type of stability and predictability is a wonderful thing. For others, it can lead to frustration and burnout. The only way to determine which of these possibilities is more likely to be true in your case is to give the matter some serious thought.

Begin by preparing an updated version of your curriculum vitae. This may be a copy of the one that you sent the institution when applying for your current job. It may be a version that you revised after reading Chapter 31, “Creating an Effective Curriculum Vitae.” Or it may simply be the résumé that you submit as part of your annual performance review. No matter which version it is that you use, sit down with it and begin to change it using a red pen (or, if you prefer to perform this exercise electronically, save your résumé under a different name and make changes to the new file). First, choose an appropriate date in the future. If you are a relatively senior faculty member, a date five years from today will be appropriate. If you are an associate professor, choose a date ten or fifteen years from now. If you are relatively new to the profession, try to look ahead fifteen or twenty years. Then, rewrite your curriculum vitae from the perspective of what you would like to have attained by that date. In conducting this exercise, try to achieve a balance between being unreasonably optimistic and excessively cautious. Try to stretch your goals a little. It is appropriate to reach a little bit beyond your grasp, but the exercise will not be valuable if you do not balance your dreams with some practicality. (For instance, many of us would like to serve as endowed distinguished professors at Harvard University, but this should only be your goal if that vision seems attainable in light of your current circumstances.)

As you draft your visionary curriculum vitae, ask yourself the following questions:

- Will my profession still be in the area of higher education? If not, what other career path might I find more satisfying?
- If I remain in higher education, do I see myself continuing largely as a faculty member or will I pursue administration or some other role within the academy?
- If I decide to continue my progress as a faculty member, what rank will I have at that time?
- If I choose to pursue administration or some other role, what position do I wish to have at that time?
- What salary level do I hope to achieve?
- Will I still be at my current institution or will I have used my experience here to pursue an opportunity elsewhere? (Be absolutely honest about your intentions.)
all of these questions. Although you may never say to your colleagues, “I see my position here as simply a springboard for something better,” the current exercise is for your eyes only and requires absolute candor.

- How many products of scholarship (as appropriate to my discipline) will I have produced? What form (that is, books, refereed articles, conference presentations, poster sessions, recitals, exhibits, reviews, productions, patents) will this scholarship assume?

- For what may I be recognized through awards and honors? You do not have to specify the particular awards, because you have no control over their selection, but think in terms of general categories such as “Campuswide Teacher of the Year,” “Outstanding Scholar in the Department of X,” “National Distinguished Service Award,” and the like. In what time frame might you hope to be recognized for these achievements?

- In which professional organizations do you hope to hold office or serve on committees?

- On which institutional committees do you hope to serve?

- Which new courses will you have developed? For which courses will you be particularly well known?

- What will your median scores on student course evaluations look like? What types of comments will students be making about your classes?

- Will your course load be primarily at the undergraduate level, graduate level, or some combination of the two? Will you be supervising theses? If so, what might some of those thesis topics be?

- How will your teaching philosophy have developed? Your scholarship philosophy? Your service philosophy?

- What will be your single greatest accomplishment, the achievement of which you will be the most proud?

In Chapter 3, “What Kind of Professor Are You?” we saw that your responses to an inventory of common activities performed by faculty members helped clarify where you are now in terms of your values, interests, and priorities. Your visionary curriculum vitae is an indication of where you hope to go. The next step is to outline a career plan that will help carry you from where you are now to where you want to be. For instance, in order to produce the number of scholarly products that are listed in your visionary vita, how many will you need to start creating each year? Will you need to write book reviews or volunteer for editorial boards of prestigious journals so as to increase your chances of being published there? If you see yourself as having made your future reputation as a stellar teacher or distinguished scholar or solid campus citizen, how does that desire guide the decisions you make over the next few years? Do your priorities suitably complement the goals that you hope to achieve?

Your career plan plots the distance from your current professional position and your ultimate professional goals and breaks it into a number of manageable steps. In the jargon of strategic planning, your career plan operationalizes your goals; it takes your dreams and creates a series of concrete, feasible actions to help you achieve them. It outlines for you the types of experience you will need to obtain in order to be ready when opportunities arise. A good career plan can help you think practically about which journals should receive your submissions, which committees deserve your most active participation, which organizations you need to become involved in, and which activities should matter most to you.

As you create your career plan, develop it to the level where you can say, “Over the course of the coming year, I need to do the following five things . . .” and then make those five things your highest priorities. At the end of each academic year, review both your career plan and your visionary curriculum vitae. How have you fared in attaining the goals you set out to achieve? Which goals no longer seem desirable or realistic to you? Are there new goals to take their place? Even though you may have developed a visionary curriculum vitae for fifteen or twenty years in the future, you will find that it is most helpful with planning strategies for the next five years. Both your visionary vita and the career plan that you develop from it will need to be updated frequently. Moreover, developing, implementing, and reviewing a career plan is no guarantee that you will achieve all the goals that you have established for your career, but it will increase the likelihood that you will achieve at least some of them. It will also ensure that you have done as much as you can to be in the best possible position when that unexpected and highly desirable opportunity comes your way.

RESOURCES


The Tenure and Promotion Process

Few academic processes cause faculty members as much anxiety as being reviewed for tenure or promotion. Not only are matters of reputation and livelihood at stake, but the very process of having your materials reviewed by a committee and the administration can make you feel as though your fate is in the hands of other people, including those who barely know you and may not appreciate the way your discipline works. In this chapter, we'll explore strategies for placing yourself in the best possible position for a favorable promotion and tenure decision. Of course, no advice from this book or from anyone can guarantee a positive result, but there are still plenty of steps you can take to help make the process as smooth and fair as possible. Let's begin with the most basic.

Prepare for Your Review Now

The day to begin preparing for your tenure review is the day you are hired. The day to begin preparing for your promotion to full professor is the day you’re promoted to associate professor. If you think that these statements are exaggerated, consider the following essential principle:

Consider each aspect of the promotion and tenure process, not from your own perspective, but from that of the people who will be reviewing your application. What will they be looking for and what will they need in order to say “yes” to your request?

When you approach the process in this way, it becomes apparent that the people who will be considering your application will be taking a long view. Even as they’re considering your record of progress (what did all of your efforts add up to?), they’ll also be considering your record of consistency (have you sustained your efforts since your last evaluation either for hiring or promotion?). It is important to begin both earning your
promotion and tenure and documenting how you've earned them at the earliest possible date. Keep in mind, however, that we are speaking of achievements at your current job and in your current rank. On how your earlier accomplishments before you were hired or last promoted relate to this process, see the very end of this chapter.

If you're reading this section and it is already well after the day you signed your contract or received your last promotion, don't despair. Unless you've made almost no preparations for this process and are on the verge of being reviewed, you can still do everything you need to do in order to receive fair and thorough consideration. But you'll need to act immediately. Begin by thinking about how you will gather and organize the documents you will need to support your application. Many faculty members find it useful to set up three files for this purpose.

* A hard copy file, which will probably be a file drawer or even an entire cabinet. In this file, keep all printed materials relevant to your accomplishments as a college professor. These materials may include publications, grant applications and award letters, correspondence from publishers about books and articles in press, syllabi and course materials that do not exist in electronic form (see below), letters of support or commendation, materials relating to recognitions, peer review reports, records of student achievements related to your work as a teacher or mentor, printed copies of student ratings of instruction, products resulting from committee work and other service, and any other item that could help you demonstrate your success in any aspect of your career.

* An email file, which may exist as a folder within your email program or may be printed and included as part of your hard copy file. Because so much academic communication occurs through email, these messages will be an essential part of your documentation. Every time you receive a message thanking you for doing a good job, praising your work, asking you for an offprint of an article, describing the influence that you've had on other scholars, or noting in any way the exceptional work that you've done, save a copy of that message in this file. Doing so will prevent you from having to recall who wrote you about what issue at what date when you are under time constraints to assemble your materials for review. If you find that your email file becomes too large and cumbersome, subdivide it into sections relating to teaching, scholarship, and service or any other subdivision that makes sense for your discipline and institution.

* An electronic file, which consists of word processing documents, PDFs, videos, Web files, recordings, and any other type of material that either exists in or can be converted to machine-readable form. Some faculty members will prefer to maintain only a single tenure and promotion file, scanning all hard copies into electronic versions and storing emails alongside other files on their computers. This approach can be very useful, as all of your materials are in one location, searchable electronically, and stored in a manner that is environmentally friendly. If your hard copy documentation is extensive, however, you may find that the time required to scan it can be considerable. Moreover, if you choose to track all of your documentation electronically, be sure to keep multiple backups, because machine-readable files are vulnerable to computer theft and hardware disasters.

You can find excellent guidelines on the types of materials that best document success in teaching, advising, research, and service in Diamond (2004).

Distinguish Between Necessary Levels of Documentation

Simply because you have a piece of documentation, you don't have to provide it to the review committee as part of your application. Some items are worth keeping because you'll need to refer to their contents in order to summarize information. Others will provide you with useful quotations that you can include in your application. Still others will help remind you of activities you may otherwise have overlooked. Many others end up being saved "just in case." In short, the purpose of keeping tenure and promotion files is not to inundate the search committee with all of their contents. Rather, it is important to keep these files so that you can easily locate particular items you may need and have access to other information when you wish to consult it. Your institution is likely to have clear guidelines on the types of items you must include as part of a tenure or promotion application. Regardless of whether these documents are sufficiently specified, consult the chair of your school's promotion and tenure committee, your department chair or mentor, or a colleague who has recently gone through the process for some guidance. Colleges and universities vary considerably in the amount of materials they wish to receive from applicants, so advice from colleagues who work at other institutions may be of limited value. Some schools encourage applicants to assemble several large binders that include all of the faculty member's course syllabi, teaching evaluations, minutes from committee work, and letters of appreciation submitted by students. Other schools would regard many of these items as "padding" or evidence that the applicant was
unable to determine what is truly important. It is vital, therefore, to learn from well-informed people at your own institution precisely how much documentation the review committees will want to receive and in what form. Also keep in mind that what your department may want to review could well be different from what a college- or university-level committee may wish to consult, so revising these materials at various stages of the process may well be inevitable.

Create an Academic Portfolio

Seldin and Miller (2008) propose a useful alternative to the bulging binders of material that so many committees claim they need (but which probably go unread or, at best, are quickly scanned): an academic portfolio that, in conjunction with a well-prepared curriculum vitae (see Chapter 31, "Creating an Effective Curriculum Vitae"), more clearly documents what a faculty member has done in a manner that is less onerous for the applicant to prepare and the reviewers to analyze. The key feature of an academic portfolio is that it is simultaneously selective and reflective. Rather than providing numerous offprints that a review committee is unlikely to read (or to understand if read), the academic portfolio forces the faculty member to select representative examples of his or her most important scholarly achievements and to indicate why these works are important in the discipline, innovative, and regarded by qualified reviewers as superior in quality. Rather than containing the syllabi of perhaps a dozen courses, the academic portfolio requires the faculty member to select a few of his or her best syllabi and to describe how each course's design and methods relate a personal philosophy of teaching, how each course is structured both to increase student learning and to adapt to individual needs, and how each course has evolved over time in response to new perspectives in the discipline, best practices elsewhere, and the faculty member's own growth in the profession. Rather than repeating information already contained in a faculty member's résumé about committee memberships or the offices held, the academic portfolio encourages the applicant to provide evidence of the benefits that resulted from this service and the value that it provided to the discipline, institution, or community. By requiring applicants to identify their best work in each area and the reasons why that work was superior, the academic portfolio helps the review committee use their time more effectively, giving them only and precisely what they need. Moreover, because applicants do not have to assemble a large amount of material, the tenure and promotion process becomes more meaningful and less time-consuming for them as well. Seldin and Miller also present a large number of sample academic portfolios from a wide range of disciplines, including biomedical engineering, child and family studies, education, foreign languages and literature, jazz and contemporary music, nutritional sciences, political science, and psychology. These sample portfolios are a valuable resource in how to document success in teaching, scholarship, and service, particularly when there may be little supporting evidence that lends itself to quantification or quick summaries.

But what can you do if your institution already has very specific requirements about the type of documents you must submit and the format in which you submit them? How can you prepare an academic portfolio when your college or university insists that you assemble huge binders of supporting material? To be sure, you do not want to create a situation where the members of the promotion and tenure committee are expecting one type of documentation but you have provided another. Their reaction is likely to be very similar to what yours would be if you had assigned a twelve-page research paper but received a five-page autobiographical essay instead. So, if you're in an institution that insists you supply vast amounts of documentation in support of your tenure or promotion application, by all means provide it—but once you are tenured or promoted, try to get appointed to the body that can get those procedures changed.

In the meantime, borrow a few elements from the academic portfolio approach and combine them with the type of documentation your institution requires. For example, rather than merely providing copies of syllabi from all of your courses, prepare annotated copies in which you relate what occurs in the course to your philosophy of teaching, the course's objectives, your ongoing strategies for promoting student engagement, and current developments in your field; illustrate how your approach to each course has evolved in light of your own growth as a college professor. Rather than simply including copies of your books, articles, and other scholarly achievements, accompany them with commentary regarding what these works have added to your discipline, how they have influenced other scholars, what further research has been made possible by your own work, and so on. In this way, even as you supply the items that your institution requires, you can place those items into a clearer context, helping to make the case of why your work was important, of high quality, and influential. In keeping with the essential principle introduced earlier in this chapter, you are viewing your application from the perspective of the committee, making it easier for those who review your application to support your request and, by so doing, increasing the likelihood of a favorable result.
Have Your Materials Reviewed Early

The advice of a chair, mentor, or trusted colleague is invaluable when preparing for a promotion and tenure review. Most faculty members understand that this advice is important, but many of them seek it too late in the process. They ask someone to review their materials shortly before they must be submitted to the review committee, making substantive revision all but impossible. Certainly, we’ve seen that many institutions require so much documentation that it is all but impossible for faculty members to assemble it long before the deadline. But there are undoubtedly other cases where the applicant is not looking for genuine advice about what can be done differently, but validation that the materials are indeed well prepared and that success will be inevitable. Whatever the reason for the delay, it is never in the faculty member’s interest.

Advice about what you should be doing as you proceed toward promotion and tenure should be requested early and often. A good mentor can tell you if the activities at which you are spending most of your time are truly those that can pay off in the long run. He or she may dissuade you from agreeing to serve on this or that committee, may recommend publishing fewer articles in first-tier journals rather than a number of short pieces in relatively unimportant publications, or may take a completely different approach. If the advice you receive from your mentor doesn’t seem right to you, you can always consult a few other people, particularly those who have recently been promoted or who have served on a review committee. If you find yourself eventually agreeing with the advice you’ve received, you’ll then have enough time to take corrective action. If, on the other hand, you seek advice too late in the process, you may already be on a path that will prove less successful for you.

The need for sound advice increases dramatically if you are submitting an application for review before it is required, such as for an early promotion. Although it can be very disappointing to be told, “I don’t think you’re ready yet,” it is far preferable to receive this news from a mentor or chair who is simply trying to help you than from a committee that has been appointed to evaluate you. Remember to seek advice early in order to have time for an additional review.

Address All the Review Criteria

Once you have decided to apply for tenure, promotion, or both—or once your institution’s timetable requires you to undergo a review—it becomes your responsibility to make the case that you deserve the committee’s approval. No matter how distinguished your career or how celebrated you are in your field, no review committee is going to grant you tenure or promotion if you are not effective in demonstrating that you have earned it. And to make your strongest possible case, you will need to address all the criteria relevant to the decision being made, not simply the criteria that you happen to believe in, regard as relevant to your situation, or think may be unclear from your curriculum vitae. When committees review applications, they are charged with deciding whether an applicant has adequately demonstrated that he or she has met the criteria, not with debating the merits of the criteria themselves or with extracting information that a candidate has neglected to supply. The process of applying for promotion or tenure is not the time to argue that your school is placing too much emphasis on research or that it fails to value service sufficiently. Nor is it the time to assume that your accomplishments are so “obvious” that everyone should already know them. Read carefully the criteria that your institution has established, address each criterion as completely as you can, and supply the documentation your institution requires. No one will be able to determine whether you fulfill the requirements unless you do everything you can to make your best case, and you cannot count on anyone else to make that case for you.

One important element in preparing the strongest possible application is to organize your materials in such a way that those who review it can readily find all the answers they are seeking. We’ve already discussed the advisability of supplying annotated copies of your materials in order to place your achievements in their proper context. In addition, good organization of your materials is also a matter of clearly labeling and arranging everything you submit. Documents that appear simply to have been "dumped" into a binder, folder, or envelope create the impression that the applicant has not taken the process very seriously, and thus the review committee may end up not taking that application very seriously. As you organize the documentation that supports your application, it is good practice to ask yourself these questions:

- Other than the fact that these items were required parts of my application, will it be clear to a reviewer why I have included each of them?
- Can a reviewer quickly find evidence in support of my success as a teacher, advisor, researcher, academic citizen, or any other role that is relevant to my application?
- What message am I trying to convey with each item that I have included? If someone doesn’t know me or my discipline very well, is
that message clear? If your scholarship has occurred in a highly innovative or nontraditional field, be sure to consider the advice on documenting these achievements that appears in Chapter 28, "Alternative Forms of Scholarship."

To help reviewers find the information they need, you might also consider including the following among your documentation:

- **A table of contents**, which indicates where each section of your documentation begins and where all particularly important materials may be found.
- **Section dividers**, which make it easy for the reader to locate all the major parts of your documentation. If you are submitting hard copies of materials in binders, it is a good idea to have dividers with tabs keyed to your table of contents. If you are submitting your materials electronically, hyperlinks should take the reader directly from the table of contents to the beginning of each section.
- **Section guides**, which enumerate for readers all the specific items that can be found in each section and, wherever possible, make it clear what insights you hope the reviewers will gain from those items. Once again, if you’re submitting your materials in electronic form, hyperlinks make it extremely easy to jump from the section guide to the specific item.

Your department, college, and institution may have additional rules for how tenure and promotion materials must be organized as part of your application. If these rules exist, follow them as carefully as possible. As you’ll discover when you serve on a review committee, it is far easier to evaluate applicants’ materials when everyone has followed the same basic format and procedures.

**The Politics of Promotion and Tenure Review**

Faculty members sometimes worry about the “politics” of promotion and tenure. Will my record be evaluated fairly? Will the review committee and upper administration regard this process merely as a means of exerting authority rather than rewarding quality? Should I be concerned that someone on the committee might just “have it in for me”? Will I be the victim of retribution for something I’ve said or a position I’ve taken? It would be misleading merely to dismiss these concerns and say that the problems they allude to never occur. It is undeniable that certain campuses seem perpetually torn by conflict. Power struggles can sometimes exist between presidents or provosts and rank-and-file faculty members, grievances can be filed, and members of the institutions’ governing boards can declare that they are opposed to the very idea of academic tenure, arguing that it protects the unproductive and is irrelevant to academic freedom. These are the situations that cause the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) to censure the institutional leaders for violating academic freedom and tenure (see www.aaup.org/AAUP/about/censuredadmins/) and that appear occasionally as stories in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. But remember that these situations are far from the norm and that when they occur, internal grievance procedures almost always protect the faculty member’s rights. Compare, for instance, the number of schools that appear on the AAUP’s watch list to the nearly three thousand colleges and universities in the United States, and you’ll see that truly egregious cases of political interference in promotion and tenure decisions are extremely rare. The vast majority of institutional review committees take their responsibilities very seriously when they evaluate the performance and credentials of faculty members. One reason for this care is that these committees tend to be composed largely of faculty members. A second reason is that administrators—who often rise from the ranks of the faculty and still see themselves primarily in this role—have very little to gain by not setting high standards and rewarding those college professors who achieve them. For this reason, if you enter a promotion and tenure process expecting it to be highly confrontational and tense, it may very well turn out to be exactly what you expect; the attitude that you yourself bring to the process can end up being contagious. But if you approach your review with the understanding that people at all levels of the institution will usually do their best to be fair in what is inevitably an imperfect process, you are likely to find the entire experience far less antagonistic than you had feared. It can thus make a palpable difference if you treat a review committee as a group of potential allies in support of your cause rather than as potential obstacles who simply stand in the way of what you are trying to achieve. Even more surprisingly, if you approach your review in this way, the committee’s own attitude toward their work may also change, and you may discover that what you had thought would be a conflict was simply yet another collaborative academic process, shared governance at its best.

We began this chapter by saying that it’s never too early to begin preparing for a promotion or tenure review because committees and administrators will be evaluating everything you have done since you were hired
or last promoted. Faculty members sometimes wonder, therefore, whether the review process will also place a great deal of emphasis on the work they completed before they reached their current institutions or ranks. The general rule of thumb is that although no professional achievement is irrelevant to a major performance review, most of the committee's attention will focus on your achievements since you began your present position or earned your last promotion. In other words, from a reviewer's perspective, your earlier accomplishments have already been evaluated and rewarded: they are what earned your current job or your present rank. So, present your entire record to the committee, but don’t be surprised if their questions are primarily about your more recent accomplishments.

REFERENCES


RESOURCES


SPECIAL CHALLENGES FOR JUNIOR FACULTY

Each stage of a faculty member’s career involves its own challenges and opportunities. For example, if you are relatively close to the beginning of your academic career, you are much more likely than your senior colleagues to:

- Be untenured
- Have multiple promotions still ahead of you
- Be repaying student loans
- Have young children at home
- Be in the process of finding your own “niche” within your discipline or at your institution

You are also probably facing these challenges while living on a fairly modest salary and dealing with expectations that can seem at times excessively high. While it may provide some comfort to know that you are not alone in this situation, is there any way in which your path can be made easier for you? What advice can senior faculty members give their junior colleagues about strategies that really work and can lead them to success in their fields? This chapter contains some very candid advice and recommendations for newer faculty members. Even if you decide that much of this advice is irrelevant to your situation, you would be well advised to reflect on it carefully. The guidelines that follow have helped many college professors who were just starting their careers and may well assist you in avoiding difficulties as you proceed toward tenure and promotion.

Select Your Service Commitments Carefully

One of the mistakes that junior faculty members occasionally make is agreeing to serve on too many committees or task forces. Committee appointments may be attractive because they seem easy goals to achieve, fill a line on a résumé, and provide contact with other members of the
SPECIAL CHALLENGES FOR MIDCAREER FACULTY

The midcareer faculty members we consider in this chapter are people who are tenured and well established in their careers, but who still have at least one more promotion to earn. Most individuals who fall into this category hold the rank of associate professor, because institutions usually tie this rank to the tenure process. If you’re an associate professor, you have probably demonstrated a great deal of success in teaching, research, or both, depending on the nature of your position and the focus of your institution; otherwise you would not have been granted tenure. You are also more likely than other faculty members to be coping with challenging personal circumstances (such as the birth of a child, the entry of your children into a new level of schooling, a divorce, aging parents, or a family member with a serious illness) at the same time that you are still trying to advance your career. The pressure of these competing priorities may, at least for some midcareer faculty members, cause a temporary decline in productivity. The good news, however, is that the strict timetable of your tenure evaluation is behind you. You’ve already accomplished many of the career goals that you set out to achieve, and other priorities may start to appear more pressing. The goal of this chapter is to explore ways in which you can keep making progress toward your next promotion, set new career goals, and still maintain a sense of balance in achieving your highest priorities. That may be a tough agenda, but you’ve already proven that you’re up to it.

Reconsider Your Priorities

When faculty members reach midcareer, it is time to reorder the ways in which they direct their energy. For many people, this means moving from a framework in which teaching and research are their first priorities to a framework in which research and service are their first priorities. This advice is bound to elicit cries of outrage at many institutions, particularly those that pride themselves on their quality of instruction. “Teaching must always remain the highest priority,” some schools will claim, “and midcareer faculty...
members should be demonstrating excellence in all three areas, not limiting their concerns to only two.” But there are reasons for placing more emphasis on service and less on developing new instructional strategies at this point in your career. After all, it’s highly unlikely that you would have been granted tenure (and probably promotion to the rank of associate professor) if there were serious reservations about the quality of your teaching. In other words, you’re in an excellent position to let your record of superb teaching stand while you devote your energies to the type of scholarship and service that will get you promoted to the rank of full professor. Taking your scholarship to the next level will benefit your institution in many different ways.

- It will ensure that you stay on the cutting edge of your field.
- It will help you continue to model effective scholarly techniques to your students.
- And it will provide you with any number of exciting new ideas that you can use to help realign your field’s curriculum during the next stage of your career.

In a similar way, emphasis on your service contributions will help you build the institution-wide reputation that you need for your next promotion and allow you to use the institutional knowledge you’ve gained over the last several years for the good of others.

Scholarship

A good place to begin the process of carrying your scholarship to the next level is to reread the last chapter and make certain you’ve taken all the advice there that is relevant to your discipline, position, and institution. Focus on these questions:

- Have you used small grants available from either your own school or external sources as seed money for larger scholarly projects?
- Have you submitted a book proposal, if that’s an appropriate work of research for your discipline?
- Have you explored the possibility of a scholarship network to enhance your research productivity?

If you’ve done all of these things, the next step is to identify the pinnacle research activity appropriate to your discipline and begin taking steps to achieve that goal. The precise nature of this pinnacle research activity will vary by discipline. In many areas, it will be the externally refereed book of research. In others, it will be a paper in a top-tier journal, a large research grant, a patent, a presentation at a highly competitive international conference, a performance of new works that receive critical acclaim, a solo exhibition at a prized venue, or any number of other possibilities. No matter what the appropriate activity may be for your field, your goal will be the same: to identify the goal, plan the steps that will be necessary to achieve that goal, and then carry out the plan, preferably in time for your next promotion. If you find that you’ve already achieved what many would regard as the pinnacle goal for scholarship in your field, identify ways in which you could set the bar even higher. Thus, if you’ve already published a book of research, select a more prestigious press or a more ambitious topic. If you’ve already received several large grants, start imagining what your dream project would be and use your success in grant writing to help fund it. If your performances or compositions have been of high enough quality to earn you tenure, what sort of international awards or recognitions could you receive to carry this success even further?

Second, midcareer faculty members should consider opportunities to conduct research and engage in creative activities abroad, such as those sponsored by the programs known collectively as Fulbright Fellowships (www.fulbrightonline.org). Faculty Fulbright Fellowships are awarded in many different categories—research only, teaching only, combined research and teaching, and short-term seminars—that can make them suitable for nearly any type of personal situation. Many faculty members find it convenient to apply for Fulbright grants after a major life change, such as a divorce or the departure of children for college, using these awards to help transform what could be a bleak period in their lives into an exceptionally positive experience. Many Fulbright awards require proficiency in a language other than English, although others do not. Regardless of the type of grant received, however, most scholars return from a Fulbright program with renewed energy and commitment to a significant scholarly project. Receiving a Fulbright can also be a significant factor when midcareer faculty members apply for promotion to the rank of full professor.

Third, midcareer faculty members should take a moment to pause and reconsider their entire career agendas. It may well be that the topics that carried you through graduate school and your first few years as a college professor now hold slightly less interest or don’t seem sufficient to sustain you through the rest of your career. Many midcareer faculty members will be active in their professions for more than twenty years and may need to refocus their research several more times to maintain their enthusiasm and keep their approaches sharp. If you begin the process of “reinventing yourself” in midcareer, you’ll find it easier to continue refining your identity periodically in the years to come. Wait too long, however,
and your identity may become so established in your discipline or at your institution that later change is much more difficult. As you set what you hope to be your research agenda for the next five to seven years, you may find that you are perfectly comfortable continuing a path that you have already taken. If that is the case, you’re very fortunate, and many of your colleagues should envy you. But if you don’t stop for a midcareer reflection, you might never realize how many other paths were once open to you.

Service

As preparation for your eventual promotion to full professor—and as recognition of your increasing experience as a faculty member at your institution—it is appropriate for you now to assume a greater role in the area of service. On the campus level, you should begin seeking service opportunities where you can have a significant impact and become known by a large cross section of your institution. For example, it may now be an appropriate time to seek election to the faculty senate, an institution-wide curricular committee, a search committee for an upper administrator, a planning group for an important event, a major task force, a committee preparing for the reaccreditation of a program or the institution as a whole, or a council that reports to the institution’s governing board. Discuss with your chair and fellow faculty members whether it might be effective for the discipline to adopt a “block voting” system that would increase the likelihood that at least one member of your department who needs a major service assignment would be successful in an election. Presenting your campaign as a matter of ensuring that departmental interests are furthered at the institutional level may also reinforce to your colleagues that you are a strong advocate for your discipline and a good “departmental citizen.”

Now may also be an appropriate time for you to seek office in a national or large regional professional association, if you haven’t already done so. Holding office as a president or vice president of an important organization in your discipline, getting your name known throughout your academic area as you help plan conferences and chair committee meetings, evaluating sites for future conventions (perhaps even having your own institution host some type of conference), and serving on the editorial board for journals all help to make you known more broadly throughout your academic area. If your institution permits or requires letters by external peer reviewers when you are considered for promotion, establishing this reputation can play a very helpful role. Also, by exposing yourself to a wide variety of programs in your discipline nationwide, you will find yourself developing new and creative ideas about how your department’s curriculum can be improved, where its alumni can be placed in graduate programs, and which programs are producing large numbers of minority doctorates as your institution continues its efforts to diversify the faculty.

Refocusing Your Career and Setting Transformational Goals

Above all, midcareer faculty members should do a candid assessment of where they are in their professional lives and what steps they may wish to consider next. After all, the more senior your rank, the less easy it can be to relocate if you wish to do so. The vast majority of academic positions that are advertised each year are designed to be entry-level positions. Though institutions will often consider faculty members holding the rank of associate professor for these lower-level positions, they are far less likely to consider an applicant who has already reached the rank of professor. To be sure, positions for experienced, even distinguished senior faculty members certainly exist, but they appear far less often than do positions for assistant or associate professors. For this reason, it may be time to start asking yourself such questions as:

- Do I see myself remaining at my current institution for the rest of my career?
- If there were a very attractive position elsewhere—but one that would require me to start over again from the point of view of earning tenure—would I consider such a position?
- Which factors (salary, job security, research opportunities, collegiality, location, placement for my spouse, greater challenge, more prestige) would make me consider relocating?
- If I could design a position that I would find irresistible, what would that be?

By considering questions such as these, you can help determine whether you are at all likely to wish someday that you were working at a different institution. If such a plan seems likely, you may well be at the point in your career when you should begin planning for this type of change.

Midcareer faculty members might also wish to consider whether they are interested in a different sort of work assignment, such as an administrative role as a department chair or dean. In the last chapter junior faculty were cautioned away from making such a decision too soon, but you may be at the perfect place in your career to consider this option.
So, if you believe you might consider an administrative position within the next five to ten years, one way to begin this process is by reflecting on the following questions:

- What is it that attracts me to college administration? If my honest answer is that it is largely a matter of increased salary or prestige, might there be other ways to obtain this goal that make better use of my individual strengths?
- When I have chaired committees, written reports, or planned events, did I find these activities satisfying or did I feel that they took time away from my more “important” work?
- Can I handle opposition? Distrust? Animosity? Can I do what needs to be done in tough situations without taking criticism personally?
- Do people who know me well tend to believe that I achieve a desirable balance between standing for something and keeping my mind open to other perspectives?
- If I had a choice between publishing a book and significantly improving a degree program, which would I truly prefer?
- Am I a good listener?
- Am I a caregiver? How do I feel when I’m called on to counsel people who have problems that I can’t solve for them?
- Do I enjoy fixing things that are “broken”?
- Do I conduct meetings that are as efficient and pleasant as possible for those who attend?
- Do I resent paperwork or having to devote a large amount of time to details?
- Can I achieve satisfaction by helping others achieve their goals even if it means that I will not be receiving the acclaim myself?
- Do I find it satisfying to develop a vision for an academic program? Am I the sort of person who can inspire others through my vision?
- When I think of the most important things that my institution does, what immediately comes to mind? Do I only think of faculty concerns and academic issues or do I also think more broadly in terms of student development and student life issues, the overall strategic direction of the institution, the institution’s relationship with external constituencies (trustees, legislators, advisory groups, donors), staff needs and concerns, and other such matters?

These questions are not intended to discourage you from thinking about administration as an appropriate next step, but rather to point out some of the realities that are faced every day by chairs, deans, provosts, and presidents. For the right sort of person, an administrative assignment can offer challenges that are personally satisfying and result in important improvements to the institution. Administration is not, however, an appropriate answer to everyone’s “midcareer crisis,” and no faculty member should pursue this type of position simply because he or she is dissatisfied with teaching and research. Moreover, one aspect of the caution given to junior faculty members may still apply to you: because many administrative appointments can leave you with less time for research and fewer opportunities to build a record as an effective teacher, accepting an administrative appointment can delay your promotion to the rank of full professor if you should decide to return to the classroom at a later date. To learn more about the precise responsibilities of chairs and deans, see Bright and Richards (2001), Buller (2006, 2007), Chu (2006), Gmelch and Miskin (2004), Gunsalus (2006), Henry (2006), and Lucas and Associates (2000).

It is natural for faculty members at midcareer to ask themselves “What’s next?” but there is no single answer that applies to every individual. Setting transformational goals as part of a career plan is a highly individualized activity. In many cases, by devoting as much energy as possible to truly significant scholarly works and major service opportunities both at the institution and within their area of academic specialty, midcareer faculty members will help keep their options open, position themselves effectively for their next promotion, and discover whether they have the sort of attributes that may make an administrative position appropriate for their personalities and career goals. For more on setting transformational goals, see Chapter 8, “Taking the Next Step in Your Career.”
SPECIAL CHALLENGES FOR SENIOR FACULTY

Reaching the level of a senior faculty member brings with it an entirely new set of opportunities and challenges. Although junior faculty members may sometimes believe that tenured full professors have finally "made it" and face no more serious obstacles to their careers, senior faculty members may view their situation quite differently. For some full professors, the very fact that there are no more promotions to earn can in itself be unsettling. After a career spent in pursuit of one academic degree after another, followed by progressions up the various faculty ranks, reaching a point in one's career where there are no more levels of recognition to seek can be disconcerting. Moreover, with increasing numbers of institutions promoting professors after twelve or fewer years of full-time service, many faculty members find that they face more than half of their careers with few opportunities for upward advancement, validation of their accomplishments by peers, or chances to increase their incomes significantly without changing institutions. Certainly, post-tenure review procedures were adopted to help institutions keep their most highly paid senior faculty members as active and productive as possible. Properly constructed, systems of post-tenure review accomplish far more than simply penalizing deadwood by rewarding and celebrating the accomplishments of truly outstanding senior faculty members. Nevertheless, it can be a real challenge for college professors to stay motivated and preserve the energy of their early years when they realize the opportunities for reward are few, they have taught the same courses more than a dozen times, and they find themselves asking that nagging question—"And just why am I still doing this?"—with increasing frequency. Fortunately, many senior professors still find a great deal of excitement in helping to shape young minds, associating with other members of the academy, engaging in new approaches to research, and serving as a leader in an institution that has been such an important part of their lives. But if you do feel as though you'd like new opportunities or are simply looking for a change, what can you do?