

- 1) University administrators are increasingly recognizing that tenure track is an investment. A department hiring a tenure-track faculty member is investing hundreds of thousands of dollars (salary, equipment, mentoring, computers, office space, etc.) on a tenure-track assistant professor. If the assistant professor is unhappy, unproductive, or unsuccessful in qualifying for tenure, then much of this investment is wasted. An effective department chair wants his or her assistant professors to qualify for tenure and will work with them to help them achieve this goal.
- 2) Familiarize yourself thoroughly with the tenure and promotion process at your institution. Most universities and many departments have written guidelines documenting the expectations for tenure and promotion as well as the procedure by which the institution determines whether to grant a candidate tenure and promotion. Be sure you are well aware of these procedures. If they are unclear, discuss them with tenured colleagues, your chair, and/or your dean.
- 3) Use this information in making major decisions about time investment and time management. The weights associated with research, teaching, and service vary from place to place. Even within these broad categories, there are substantial differences. For example, some universities place more emphasis on published research, others on obtaining grant money.
- 4) Plan carefully. Frequently, universities require large, complex dossiers of information in your tenure file. Keep careful records of any activities that could go into your file. This includes obvious examples such as your publications or formal teaching evaluations. But it can also include copies of e-mails from students saying how your course inspired their career choice, commendations from professional colleagues about the value and quality of your service, and so on. Organize this information in the format required by your college or university for presentation of the dossiers. This will save you considerable time when it comes time to actually assembling the tenure package.
- 5) Many universities require candidates for tenure and promotion to write statements summarizing their achievements. Write these in a positive, future-oriented manner (i.e. "As an associate professor, I plan to enhance my contributions in this area" as opposed to "As an assistant professor, I should have spent more time on this area"). At the same time, don't pad your vita or misrepresent your contributions.
- 6) Cultivate friendly, cordial relationships with your colleagues. Even if they aren't your "type" of people, spend time with your colleagues and students and let them know that you are interested in them as individuals. Even if you don't like sports, for example, if you have an older colleague who is a sports nut say something like "what did you think of Saturday's game?" to start a brief conversation. Be discreet about expressing strong opinions on politics and controversial issues to senior colleagues who disagree with them. Attend and participate in departmental colloquia and other functions. Al-Hindi is absolutely right when she says "get to know the departmental culture."
- 7) Effective teaching is very important. Use resources from this seminar and others

to work on effective teaching. Department chairs and deans don't like to face complaints from students or their parents about poor teaching, unfair grading, and so on and a history of such complaints can and will certainly work against you when it comes time for tenure. Increasingly, it is becoming harder to grant tenure to people who have reputations as indifferent or poor teachers.

8) At the same time, don't spend so much time on teaching that you neglect your research. Don't overprepare. Each lecture doesn't have to be perfect. You can probably cut your preparation time by 40-60% and teach just as effectively.

9) Service activities, in moderation, are important (here I disagree somewhat with Al-Hindi). Membership in an on-campus committee helps you to get to know important people in other departments in the university. Service at the disciplinary level also helps you make valuable professional contacts. Turn service assignments to your advantage.

10) To the extent that your university expects or requires outside letters of recommendation for tenure and promotion, get to know and cultivate older faculty members in your area of specialization who are potential referees. It is much easier for a referee to write about someone they know personally than about a stranger. Become active in your specialty group of the AAG or an equivalent organization in which these persons are active.

11) Be active in the AAG and in other professional organizations associated with your sub-discipline. Attend and present at AAG and at your regional division meeting each year and, as appropriate present at smaller meetings focused on your particular area of research and teaching interest (i.e. NACIS, NCGE, UCGIS, Binghamton, etc.). The AAG is not a time to sightsee or visit non-geographer friends and relatives; stay in or near the conference hotel and use your time cultivating contacts and exchanging information.

12) For some persons, the AAG is intimidating. If you feel intimidated at large conferences such as the AAG, you might consider the following: a. Join/become active in a specialty group in your research area. Attend its business meetings. As opportunities arise, volunteer for service to or hold office in the specialty group.

b. Before the meeting, e-mail well-known professors who you want to meet. Say something like "I am looking forward to your presentation on the geography of xxx. I am wondering if we can perhaps get together briefly during the meeting to talk about the relationship between your research and some of the projects I am working on."

c. Ask your department chair, or trusted senior colleagues, to take time to introduce you to key people who they know.

d. Don't hesitate to introduce yourself to well-known people in your area of specialization. A few senior geographers are brusque or unfriendly to young

strangers, but many are welcoming. In introducing yourself, say things that will make clear that you and the well-known person have common ground: i.e. “I read your paper in the Annals on climate of southeast Asia and I think your method may be applicable to work I am doing in North America.” or “My colleague Marcia Jones graduated from your department—did you work with her?”

13) Make friends outside your department and/or outside the University. In getting together with these people, however, avoid getting caught in “bitch” sessions in which people swap stories about how bad things are or have been. Don’t waste your Friday afternoons in the coffee shop or bar with people who complain. Hang out with people who have positive outlooks on their professions and their lives.

14) Maintain a balance between your work and other aspects of your life. Make sure that you have time to cultivate an interest or hobby and get to know people who share these interests. If you like sports, for example, get season tickets to the University's games or play on intramural teams. If you are a musician, join a community choir or join an amateur band. If you are an environmental activist, become active in the local Sierra Club or similar organization; if you are a religious person join a church or religious congregation; and so on.

15) Join or maintain a program of regular physical exercise. Jog, do yoga, work out, whatever. Maintain an exercise program appropriate to your age, interests, and level of fitness.