

Faculty Workload, and the Tenure Application Process

Folks: I will test you on this material; so study it with diligence! (Don't omit the foot-notes!)

Introduction

In this school, like in most other schools of this type (research universities, which are universities where you can study for a PhD, in addition to a lower level degree like a BA or a BSc), there are two main categories of teachers: those who are considered



“permanent¹,” and those who are part-time or full-time but not permanent. This document is about teachers who are considered permanent because they have achieved *tenure*, or are considered to be on their way to achieving tenure

(referred to as tenure-track or ladder faculty) after meeting certain specified requirements (mentioned below).

Below is a blank (reformatted) annual report that a faculty member has to file at the end of each academic year in the *College of Arts and Sciences* here at U.B. (This process, however, has now been computerized.) Before you *study* it let me preface it with a few words about the faculty

¹ Examples of “permanent” teachers: Professor; Associate Professor. Examples of “non-permanent” teachers: adjunct instructor; adjunct professor; lecturer; clinical professor; visiting professor; assistant professor; etc. Note: in this group only an *assistant professor* is a tenure-track professor and therefore is not only eligible for a permanent position but *must* eventually achieve that position through the *tenure application* process. What happens if the teacher fails to get tenure? The teacher’s appointment is not renewed (a polite way of saying the teacher is fired).

workload, and the related matter of the *tenure* application process at this university (and by implication at most *research universities* across the world).



First things first, though: There are four main reasons why I have produced this document for you: (a) to enhance your education by making you more knowledgeable about how research universities operate in this country (I am a teacher, remember); (b) to make you understand why you are expected to take greater responsibility for your own learning than would be the case if you were attending a “hold-my-hand-and-pamper-me” institution (such as a four-year college or a community college); (c) to provide you with some sense of what all the duties of a full-time teacher are at this university; and (d) so that you can understand how teachers establish their *scholarly authority* to research, write, and teach. (The subtext of the last two items: if you have some idea of the pressures that faculty face, in a research university like this one, then hopefully you will be kinder and gentler toward them—smile.)

Too often, there is the mistaken assumption by students (and the public at large) that teachers here do nothing else, but teach—even though most teachers teach only four courses total per *academic year*.² Anyhow, in terms of hiring and promotion, the truth is that fulltime faculty have to

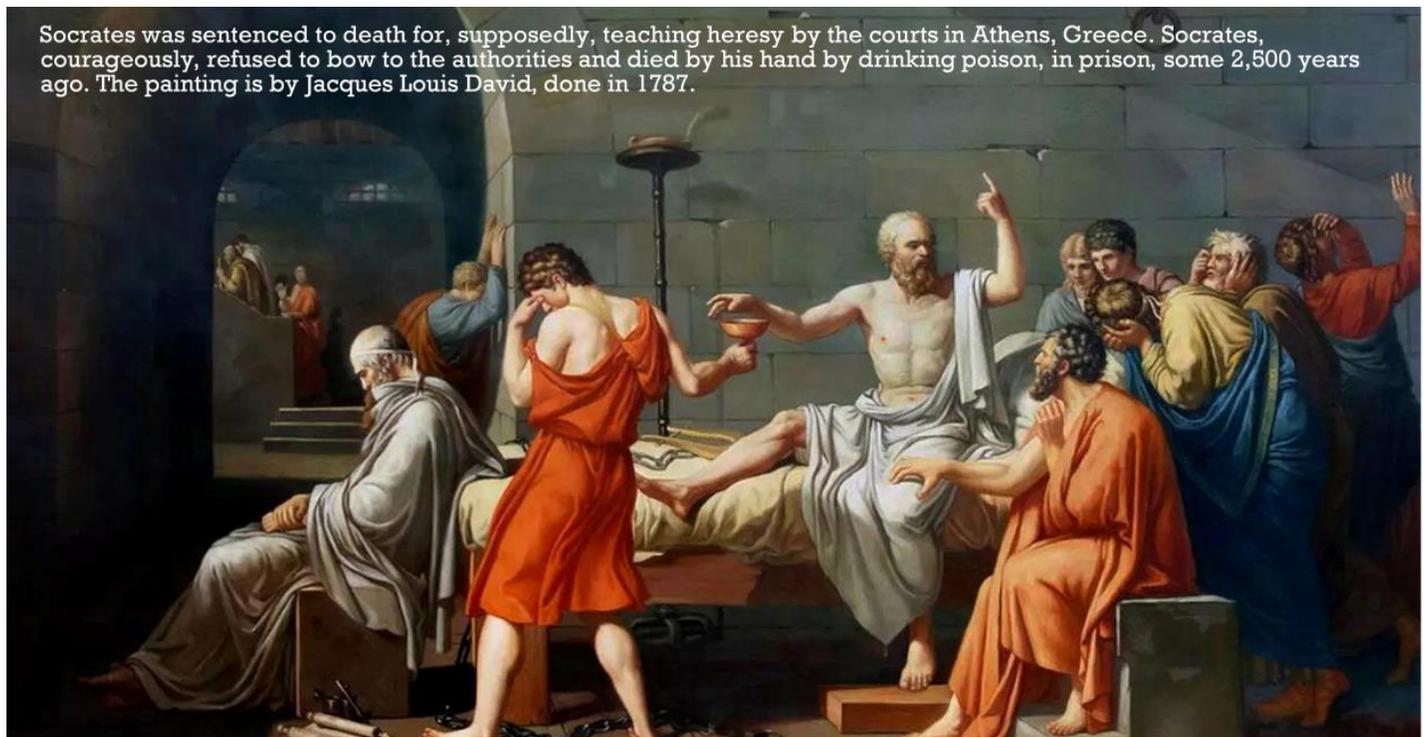
² I sometimes teach six, but that is mainly by choice... kind of. What this also means, by the way, is that I don't get

concentrate first on research and publication, followed by teaching, and then on what is called "service"—serving on committees and that sort of thing, inside and outside the university. In a non-research university, that is any higher education institution that does *not* offer PhDs (such as a 2-year or 4-year college), teachers are not required to do research and publish, but their teaching load is heavier (typically six to eight courses per academic year), and their average pay is generally less.

Definition of Tenure

So, what exactly does one mean by "tenure"? It simply refers to a "permanent" appointment (in contrast to a temporary and/or part-time appointment) of an instructor; hence, here at U.B., tenure is referred to as *continuing appointment*. One way to understand tenure is to see it in terms of being "on probation"; that is, until the teacher gets tenure he/she is on probation for six to seven years! (So, now you understand why some teachers, facing this kind of pressure, become cranky when students hassle them with petty problems.) If tenure is granted, the pressure to continue research and publishing, however, does *not* end.

Although it is commonly assumed that a teacher with tenure can never be laid off (unless, of course, the person is found guilty of some criminal offense), here at U.B., a tenured faculty

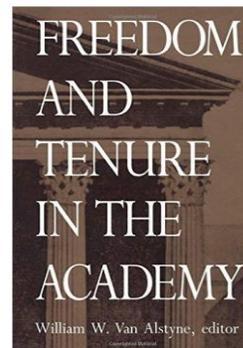


member can be let go if the school eliminates his/her department or because of budget cuts imposed by the state. Reminder: this is a taxpayer-funded institution that was established to provide access to higher education to working-class or lower-middle-class students (that is students like you) who could not afford to go to private institutions, such as Cornell or Columbia University.

paid for two of the six courses.

Origins of Tenure

How did this tradition of tenured appointments arise? As a way of protecting the *academic freedom* of faculty to do research and to publish on whatever topic they may choose (and thereby advance the frontiers of human knowledge, as well as work toward the betterment of society), and in non-research institutions as a way of rewarding teachers for their experience, hard work, and commitment to the institution.³ Ultimately, because tenure is so intimately connected to academic freedom it is, one can justifiably argue, one of the hallmarks of a democratic society. (Imagine if there had been such a thing as tenure in Ancient Greece and the philosopher Socrates had had tenure! Can you think of other similar examples but from recent history?⁴ What about from the present?⁵)



³ This university's policy on academic freedom, reads in part:

The University supports the principle of academic freedom as a concept intrinsic to the achievement of its institutional goals. This principle implies a trust in the integrity and responsibility of the members of the academic community. Samuel P. Capen, former Chancellor of the University of Buffalo, who is remembered for the tradition of academic freedom he implemented during his leadership of the University, said in 1935:

"Acceptance by an institution of the principles of academic freedom implies that teachers in that institution are free to investigate any subject, no matter how much it may be hedged about by taboos; that they are free to make known the results of their investigation and their reflection by word of mouth or in writing, before their classes or elsewhere; that they are free as citizens to take part in any public controversy outside the institution; that no repressive measures, direct or indirect, will be applied to them no matter how unpopular they may become through opposing powerful interests or jostling established prejudices, and no matter how mistaken they may appear to be in the eyes of members and friends of the institution; that their continuance in office will be in all instances governed by the prevailing rules of tenure and that their academic advancement will be dependent on their scientific competence and will be in no way affected by the popularity or unpopularity of their opinions or utterances...."

The full policy is available here: <http://www.student-affairs.buffalo.edu/judicial/12rulesp.pdf>

⁴ Consider the examples of Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa.

⁵ Two points worth noting: first, there is no or little academic freedom in countries like China, Russia, Egypt, Iran, etc. today, and even in this country all kinds of pressures can be brought on faculty who are deemed not to toe the line pursued by the White House on research matters considered by it to have political significance (I particularly have in mind the fate of some scientists working on global warming and climate change or stem-cell research during the administrations of George W. Bush, Jr. and Donald Trump).

Second, it is true that there will be *some* faculty who will abuse the tenure privilege by using tenure as a license to do nothing but the very bare minimum (e.g. no research and publication, and/or no service, and/or teaching classes irresponsibly—that is with little or no concern for academic rigor, professional ethics, and so on). Such faculty, however, are, in the minority. Some of you may have come across such teachers because they tend to be quite popular among undergraduates since so little is expected of the students in courses taught by them. (Both teacher and students collude to corrupt a privilege that ought to receive the utmost respect, to the detriment of the students and, in the final analysis, society-at-large.)

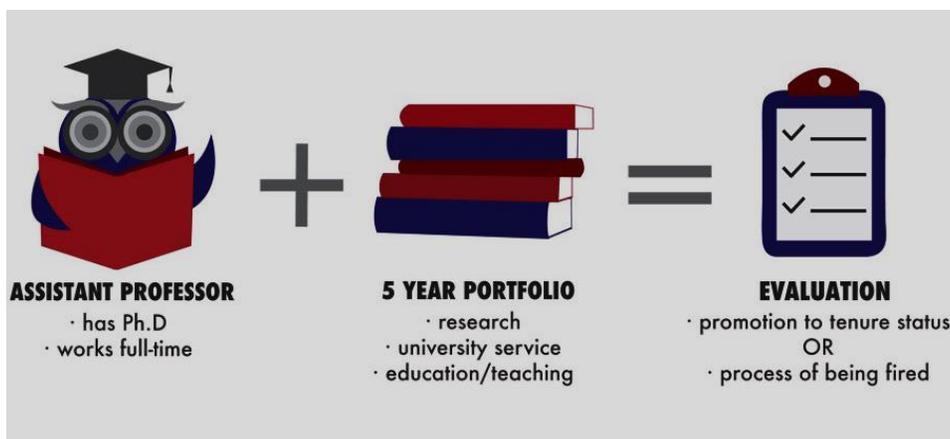
Despite the clear importance of tenure in ensuring academic freedom and integrity in higher education, I would be remiss if I did not mention the fact that all over United States there is pressure from conservative forces (usually) to get rid of tenure all together—for both political and budgetary reasons.

It is important to also point out that the tenure application process is also a means to establishing one's *scholarly authority* to research and teach in a research university (like this one). Scholarly authority, which is also tied in with academic freedom, obviously, refers to the academic authority one acquires through the processes of research, teaching, and contemplation so as to be considered as an "expert" in one's subject area or discipline *relative to those who do not have such authority*—such as laymen or students (like yourselves).

External Evaluation of Research and Publication

Not surprisingly, to obtain *tenure*, the most important component, *in practice*, is research and publication. Consider that when a faculty member comes up for tenure review (usually after a six to seven-year term appointment)⁶ the tenure *dossier* that is prepared for evaluation by *external reviewers* only has in it his/her publications, together with a research statement and the person's CV (*curriculum vitae*, an academic resume). The preparation of the dossier and its submission by the school to external reviewers for their evaluation is, in reality, the most important step in the tenure application process.

By the way, the faculty member is not allowed to recommend or even know who the external reviewers are and is never allowed to see their evaluations at any time. We call this kind of external review as a *double-blind review* process, meaning neither the external reviewers nor the tenure applicant know who each other is/are.



Although this is not always stated in writing, it is understood by everyone that among the research publications submitted in the dossier there must be at least one book—published by a reputable publisher (meaning a publisher who subjects manuscripts to external review by experts before a decision is made by the publisher on whether the book should be published). In other words, the unwritten rule here in the College of Arts and Sciences (as well as in most other

⁶ Between the time you are hired and when you are required to present yourself for the tenure application process some six to seven years later, you will have been reviewed by your department about two or three times to determine if you are making steady progress (in terms of research and publication) toward tenure. Though not common, it is quite possible that your appointment can be terminated after one of these reviews if the department strongly feels you are not making any progress.

schools here at U.B. and for that matter at most other research universities in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world) is no book, no tenure, plain and simple.

Note, however, that as with most unwritten rules, exceptions can be made if the contribution of the person coming up for tenure is outstanding in some other area—e.g., publication of a large number of important journal articles or obtaining large research grants, etc. So, now you know who writes most of the textbooks and library books found in schools, colleges, and universities across the planet. (You thought teachers wrote books for money; with rare exception, that is not true. If teachers at research universities were not forced to write books, then believe me, educationally, the world would be a poorer place. Plus, in my opinion, they would be less knowledgeable teachers.)



Teaching

Hey, what about teaching? Doesn't teaching effectiveness (as measured by student course evaluations) come into play when someone is up for tenure? Yes, in principle but *in practice*, the unwritten rule is no. Imagine this scenario: you have excellent student course evaluations but your publications output is so weak that you do not even have a book published. You will be denied tenure. Now think of this scenario: you have poor student course evaluations but your publications output is strong. You will be granted tenure. Reminder: the tenure dossier that is prepared for external evaluation will *not* have anything in it about teaching.

Voting

When the evaluations from the external reviewers come back the completed dossier (to which will also be added other important documents from within the university—such as letters from the chair of the faculty member's department and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences either supporting or not supporting the tenure application), together with copies of the research publi-

cations, will be submitted to committees at various levels of the university to be examined, and voted upon. (Votes from each level are made available to the next level.)

The final stage is when the university president is presented with a recommendation by a university-wide committee to either grant or deny tenure. The president then makes the final decision on the recommendation. If tenure is *not* granted, the faculty member's term appointment is NOT



renewed; he/she must seek employment elsewhere. Note that while the procedures for applying for tenure are by and large transparent, the fact that human beings are involved in the decisions that are made along the way must mean that “politics” may also intervene—but usually there is no way to prove it. Therefore, it is extremely rare to have a denial of tenure decision overturned, *except on procedural grounds* (meaning the university did not follow its own tenure review procedures). If a faculty member so affected challenges the decision (usually involves hiring a lawyer), there is usually little chance that the person will prevail.

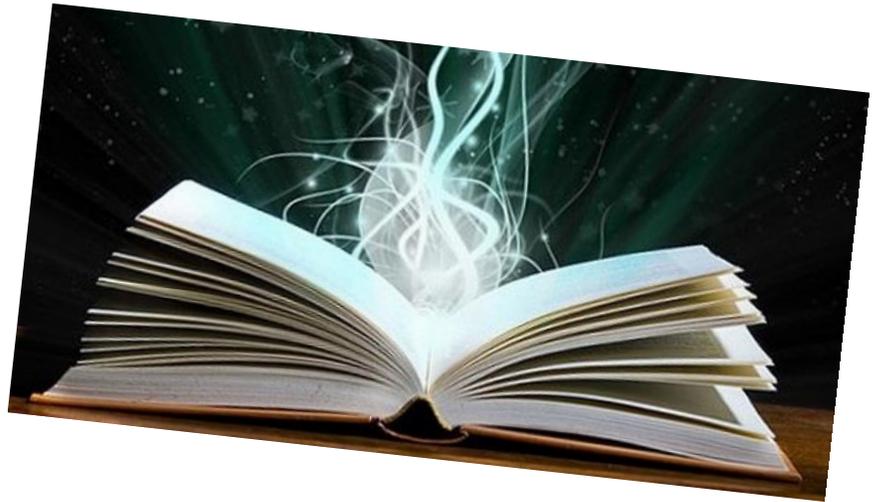
Promotion to Full Professor

If a faculty member is granted tenure then the person moves from the rank of *assistant* professor to *associate* professor. To be promoted to *full professor* an associate professor must go through the exact same process as outlined above (the only difference is that if a professorship is denied the person continues to remain on a continuing appointment as an associate professor.) When a teacher calls himself/herself professor, you should not automatically assume that the person is *officially* titled professor; he/she may simply be an *assistant* professor or an *associate* professor. Incidentally, the majority of teachers at U.B., as one would expect in any similar institution, are either assistant or associate professors.⁷

⁷ By the way, do you know the ranks of your teachers? Why not? Do your homework; find out the official rank of the persons teaching you by doing a search under “find people” on your MyUB page. Note: If the rank of a teacher is indicated as lecturer or instructor then you can assume that the person is *not* eligible for tenure (and may not even have a PhD—though this is not always true, especially if the person is titled *Adjunct*). On the other hand, this does not mean that everyone who is an assistant or associate professor has a PhD either—though such a situation, however, is very rare here at U.B.; meaning they almost always have a PhD. (By the way, you should assume that the

The Book Publication Process

Folks, given that the publication of a book is essential for any one coming up for tenure at this university (with rare exception as explained), you should have some idea of how a book comes into being. So, here are the basic steps:



1. Choose a topic on one's research interests (but must be something on which not much has been written by others).
2. Do preliminary research and determine a tentative title for the book.
3. Prepare what is called a "book prospectus" which is essentially a summary outline of the book comprising such elements as total length, number of chapters, chapter headings together with brief summaries, projected date of completion, etc.
4. Find a reputable scholarly publisher who publishes books on topics similar to yours and send the publisher the book prospectus together with your CV (resume).
5. If the publisher likes the topic, you are sent a book contract to sign. (If the publisher is not interested then you look elsewhere until, hopefully, you find one.)
6. You research and write the book (a process that is often accompanied by blood, sweat, and tears and may take anywhere from two to ten years or more).
7. Submit the manuscript for review by the publisher. If the publisher is, generally, satisfied then your manuscript is sent out for external review to experts in your field (this process is known as *peer review*).
8. Revise the manuscript per recommendations of the reviewers who were sent your manuscript by the publisher (NOTE: you are never told who the external reviewers were).
9. Following revisions (which can take anywhere from a few months to a couple of years) you resubmit the manuscript to the publisher.
10. If the publisher is satisfied, then the manuscript is subjected to copy-editing (checking grammar, spelling, etc.) It is only at this point that you know that your book will most likely be published.
11. While the copy-editing process is underway, the publisher applies to the Library of Congress for CIP (Cataloguing-in-Publication) data for the book (this is library cataloguing information that usually appears on the copyright page); applies for the ISBN number to the ISBN agency; and files a copyright application with the Copyright Office (located at the Library of Congress).

higher the rank of a teacher the more knowledgeable the teacher is about his/her subject; though again this is not always true.) The phrase "10 mo" next to the person's rank stands for 10 month appointment (which means that the person is not paid for two months of the year—during the summer unless the teacher is teaching summer courses (in which case she/he will be paid per course).

12. The copy-edited manuscript is sent back to you for revisions.
13. You make the revisions and you send the manuscript back.
14. The publisher reviews the manuscript once more and if satisfied sends the manuscript to a book printer.
15. While the book is being printed, the publisher starts marketing the book.
16. After the book is printed, depending upon the provisions of the contract, you are sent a number of free author copies for your personal use.

Reviews

Even after your book is published, it doesn't necessarily mean you are home free. There is the matter of reviews of your book. Though not absolutely necessary (unless you are seeking promotion to full professorship), your case for tenure promotion can be greatly improved if you are able to point to positive reviews of your work in academic journals—either in the form of “stand-alone” reviews or (even better) as part of a longer review of several books on the same topic, known as an *essay review*. The essay review is what one may call the gold standard of reviews; at the very least, because it is felt that your work is making a sufficiently important mark in the subject area to which it belongs to merit such attention. The difficulty here, however, is that given that thousands of books are published every year, very few of them get a chance to be reviewed. Whether your book will be reviewed or not is, therefore, also (to some extent) a matter of luck. Who decides if a book should be reviewed? Answer: book review editors of academic journals. How do they know about the existence of the book in the first place? Answer: the publisher sends them a copy of the book.

Citations by Other Scholars

Another element of the scholarly publications process that tenure promotion committees will be interested in is to what extent the instructor's publications (both books and academic journal articles) are being cited by other scholars, here in the United States and elsewhere. Citations are usually (not al-

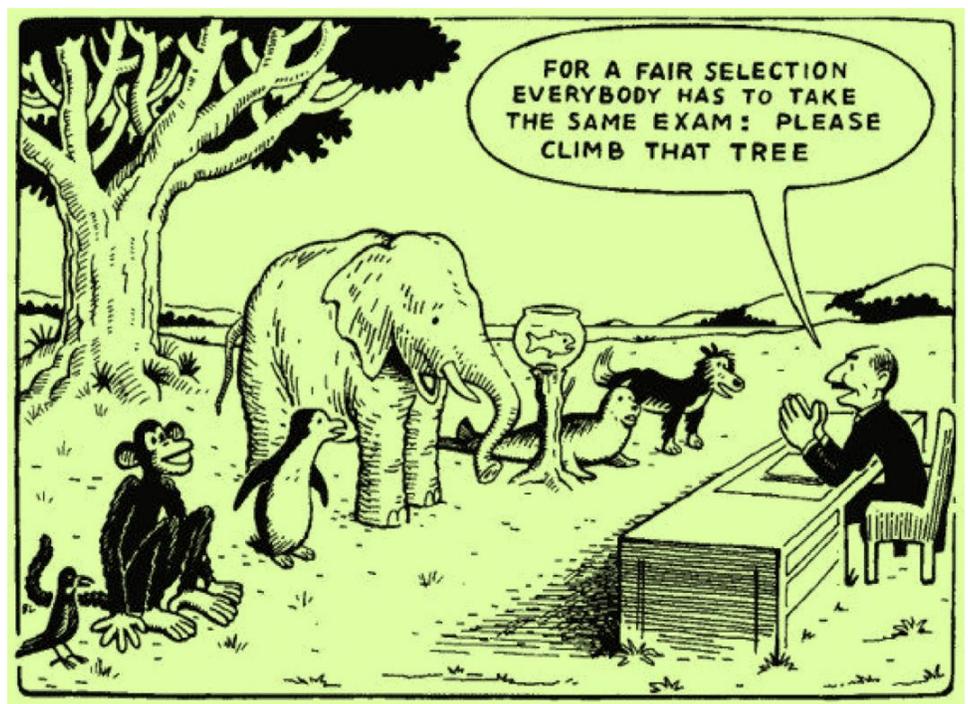


ways) an indicator of the academic worthiness of a person's publications. A commonly used tool to determine if your work is being cited by others is a citation index (such as the Web of Science) and, of course, the internet itself (e.g. Google Scholar).

Academic Journal Articles

Another important requirement of tenure promotion is the publication of articles in scholarly journals. The process for publishing journal articles follows *almost* the same process as indicated above for books, with the exception of steps 3 and 11, and it can be just as arduous. In other words, merely because you have submitted an article to a journal that it will automatically be published is a completely wrong assumption. The rejection rate for submitted articles is very high; can be as high as over 90% for some journals. In other words, to get your article published is not easy; even if you feel you have written a masterpiece!

Assuming, in the first place, that you sent your article to the appropriate journal in terms of subject matter and/or methodology of research, there are at least three factors (individually or working together) involved in this high rejection rate: (a) your article is not as well-researched as you think; (b) limited space (there are only so many articles a journal can publish); and (c) your article is on a "controversial" topic—from the perspective of the journal editors (and/or the peer reviewers)—so, they reject it.



About this last point, journal editors and the peer reviewers they choose to have your article reviewed (involving a double-blind review process) may be biased against some types of knowledge. For example, articles on issues of race, or gender, or class in almost all countries will most likely (not necessarily always) be looked at with an unfair critical eye by most so-called "main-stream" journals since their editors tend to be males of the dominant race/ethnic heritage and are usually from a bourgeois background. By the way, the study of these kinds of bias (that is bias related to power-relations in society) in the production of knowledge is known as the *sociology of knowledge* (which itself can be considered, some may argue about this, part of a broader field of study called *epistemology*.)

Conclusion

Three additional points about the tenure application process that you need to know. One, the foregoing may suggest that the application process is entirely meritocratic. However, as already hinted at above, "politics," in some cases, can also be a factor in whether or not a person gets



tenure. Here, I am specifically referring to issues such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, and so on, that can intervene to derail a tenure application.⁸ Needless to say, even if a person is a victim of one or more of these factors, it would be a really uphill battle to prove such victimization.

⁸ To see what I mean, check out, for example, these sources: [A](#); [B](#); [C](#); and [D](#). Here is an account by a EuroAmerican job applicant, from source [A](#), that gives you an idea of what can happen. (By the way, "Dr. Chair" happened to be a EuroAmerican female.)

Dr. Chair told me that the African-American woman who had been fired did not produce what she was expected to produce or teach what she was expected to teach. When I asked what those expectations were, Dr. Chair sighed and said something to the effect of, "She's a black feminist, you know, and it's just: not everything is about black feminism." She said this to me matter-of-factly, as if it were a satisfactory answer to my question. It was at this point in the conversation with Dr. Chair that my brain and I were really starting to freak out... Dr. Chair kept going. "I mean," and this, dear readers, I swear, is an absolute verbatim quote, "just because you're black doesn't mean you're good at everything."

And you thought colorblind racism does not exist in academia. Wrong! See also <https://twitter.com/hashtag/fight4facultyofcolor>

Two, in order to be eligible for tenure promotion one must be on what is called a tenure-track appointment. Now, not all appointments in universities and colleges are tenure track appointments; in fact such appointments appear to be in decline relative to the alternative, *term appointments*. What kind of appointment one has is determined by the original job ad.

Three, it is common practice for those coming up for tenure to sort of “cheat” by revising their PhD dissertations and submitting them for publication (in which case some of the book publishing steps above, such as steps 1 through 3, do not apply). This is a personal peeve of mine. I am using the word *cheat* here (even though many academics disagree with me on this) because I feel the person is “recycling” work that was done for some other purpose. (It is like handing in a term paper you have done for one teacher, after revising it, to another teacher; which of course is cheating.) I am not saying a PhD dissertation should not be published—on the contrary, if it is worth publishing

it should be published—but it should not count as the only book in a tenure dossier if that is the only book one has. The publication of a book that did not begin its life as a PhD dissertation, in my opinion, demonstrates potential that the person will continue to be productive after obtaining tenure.⁹

STEPS TOWARD TENURE

- (1) Be hired in a tenure-track position (as assistant professor) and work your tail off (so to speak) for the next six-seven years.
- (2) Do research and publish, most especially publish a book (usually, no book, no tenure).
- (3) Prepare two versions of tenure dossiers (one for external reviewers and the other for internal use).
- (4) The school submits the dossier for external reviewers to 7-10 academic experts in your field (you are not allowed to know who they are).
- (5) Voting at various levels of administration on your dossier after the reviews have come in (you are never allowed to see the reviews).
- (6) If everything goes well, you receive a letter from the U.B. president stating you have been granted tenure (you are now an associate professor and you get a small annual pay raise--less than a thousand bucks). If you are denied tenure, you must leave U.B.
- (7) Next step is to work toward full professorship which requires repeating all the steps above, except step 1 of course. (If you are denied full professorship, you remain in your position as an associate professor.)

⁹ You guessed right, I never published my PhD dissertation. There were two reasons: I did not receive proper advice and I didn't think it was worth publishing it, anyway. My tenure was granted on the basis of an entirely different book which was not connected with the dissertation.

Annual Faculty Report - 20....

Name _____
Department _____
Rank _____

I. Teaching

A. Courses Taught

B. Graduate Student Supervision

1. Number of PhD committee assignments _____
2. Number of PhD committees chaired _____
3. Number of Masters committee assignments _____
4. Number of Masters committees chaired _____

C. *New Courses Developed/Major Course Revisions* [List by title, and briefly describe course added, or nature of course revision. Also describe type of course -- e.g., lecture, seminar -- and indicate 1998-99 enrollment.]

D. *New Teaching Materials Prepared* [Briefly describe new materials, title of course.]

E. *New Teaching Techniques or Technologies Introduced* [Briefly describe and list title(s) of course(s).]

F. *Meetings, conferences, courses, or seminars attended primarily to improve teaching techniques or substantive knowledge for courses taught.*

II. Research and creative activity

A. *Publications since 20... annual report* [List only items actually published. Include author, title, journal, publisher, date, page length.]

1. Books/monographs
2. Book chapters
3. Articles in scholarly journals
 - a. Reviewed or refereed articles
 - b. Other
4. Book reviews
5. Other publications

B. *Grants Received* [List source, beginning and ending date, amount, description of project.]

C. *Grant Applications Submitted* [Funding agency, date submitted, amount, brief description of project.]

D. *Papers Presented* [List title, audience, location, date.]

1. Invited papers
2. Other papers (contributed)

E. *Lectures* [List title, audience, location, date.]

F. *Inventions and Patent Disclosures*

G. *Other Creative Activities* [Provide a brief description for each activity reported including dates, location, and any outside sponsorship.]

H. *Journals Edited* [List names of journal, editorial title.]

III. Honors and awards received since 20... annual report

[List separately each item, and briefly describe the reason for the award, if that is not apparent from the title of the award.]

IV. Professional Organization Activities During 20....

A. *Elected offices* [List title, organization, and length of service.]

B. *Other service* [Describe service, name of organization, and length of service.]

V. Service during 20....

A. Departmental service

1. Committees chaired
 - a. standing
 - b. ad hoc
2. Committee memberships

- a. standing
- b. ad hoc
- 3. Special projects [Briefly describe each entry.]
- 4. Administrative assignments [Briefly describe, e.g., Director of Graduate Studies.]

B. University service during 20...

- 1. Faculty Senate (activities, committees, projects, etc.)
 - a. officer
 - b. standing committee
 - (1) chair
 - (2) member
 - c. ad hoc committee
 - (1) chair
 - (2) member
 - d. special projects [Describe each, and nature of service.]
- 2. Presidential/Vice Presidential committees, task groups, etc. [Briefly describe each entry.]
- 3. University administrative assignments [Briefly describe each entry.]
- 4. Other [Briefly describe each entry.]

C. Public Service during 20...

- 1. Research [Describe studies, theoretical or applied, designed to address community, cultural, economic or social needs/issues in the region or the state.]
- 2. Teaching [List any practica, studios, classes, clinics, internships or other teaching programs that are designed to address the issues described under item #1 above.]
- 3. Public Service Projects and Activities [Describe projects and activities, including technical assistance and consulting services, that address the issues described in item #1 above.]
- 4. Other Public Service [Describe any direct volunteer service to the community such as boards, memberships, workshops, seminars, or lectures with community agencies or organizations.]

VI. Plans for 20...

A. Teaching

B. Research and Creative Activity

C. Public Service Projects and Activities

VII. Other Matters You Wish to Report to the Chair, Dean or Provost

NOTE: All images in this document are copyrighted © by their respective owners. All rights reserved.