

Faculty Workload, and the Tenure Application Process

Folks: I may test you on this material; so, study it with diligence! (Don't omit the footnotes!)

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

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).



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

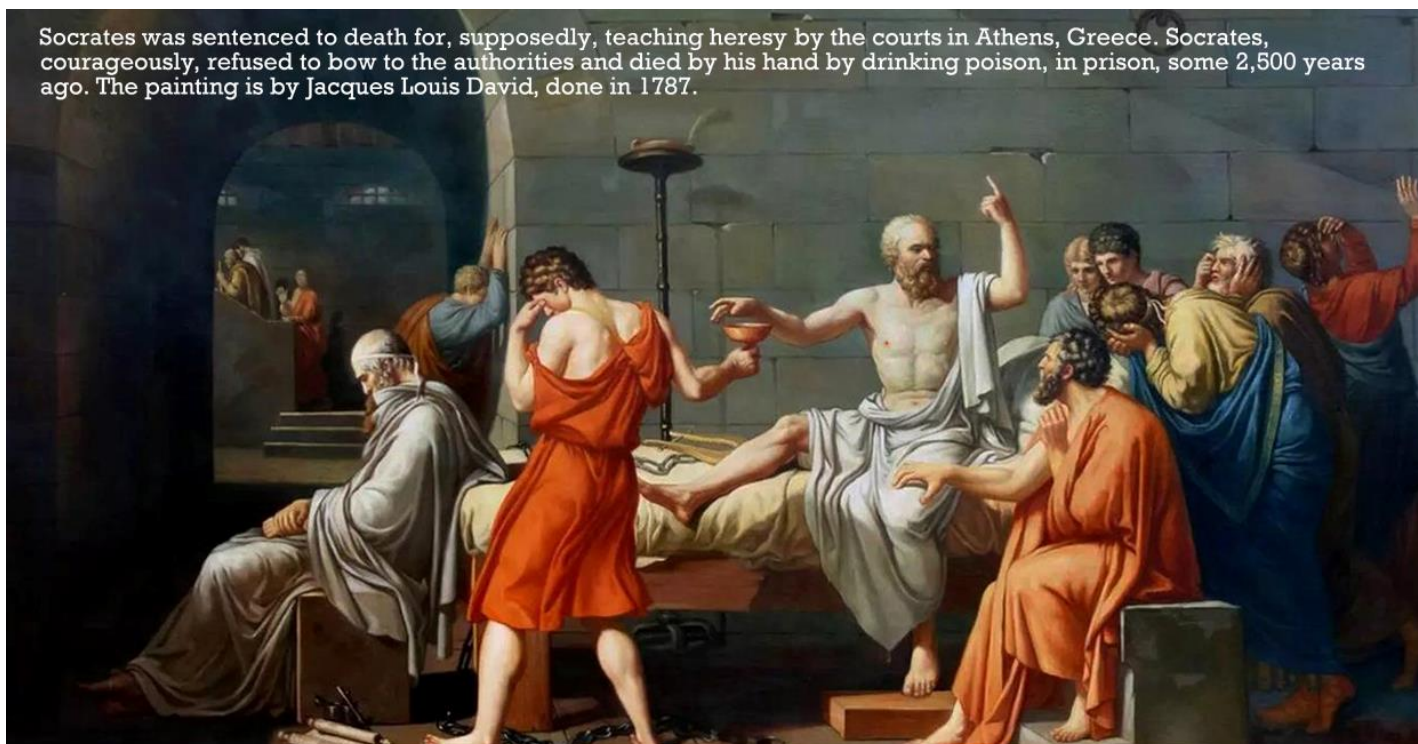
² I sometimes teach six, but that is mainly by choice... kind of. What this also means, by the way, is that I don't get paid for two of the six courses.

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 mem-

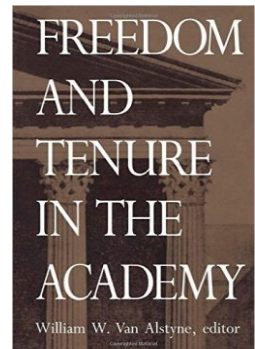


ber can be let go if the school eliminates his/her department or because of budget cuts imposed by the state. Reminder: this is a taxpayer-funded institution that was established to provide access to higher education to working-class or lower-middle-class students (that is students like you) who could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

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)

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



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).

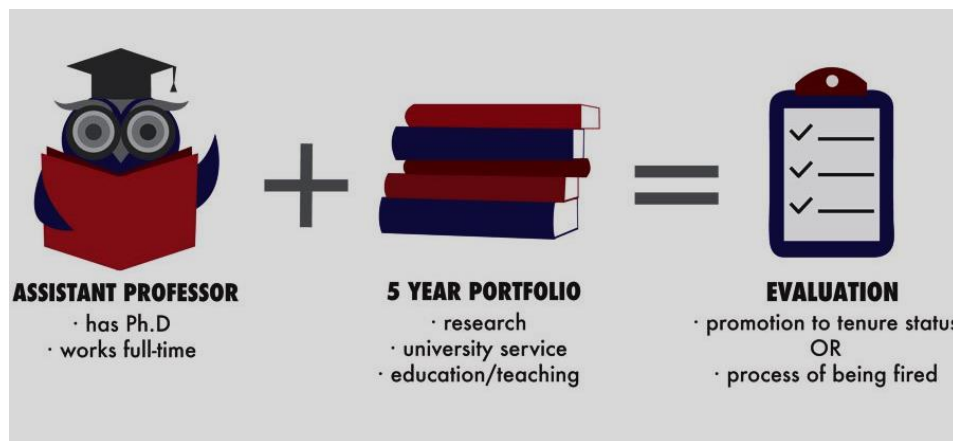
Second, it is true that there will be *some* faculty who will abuse the tenure privilege by using tenure as a license to do nothing but the very bare minimum (e.g. no research and publication, and/or no service, and/or teaching classes irresponsibly—that is with little or no concern for academic rigor, 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.)

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 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

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.

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 publications, 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 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).

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).
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 always)



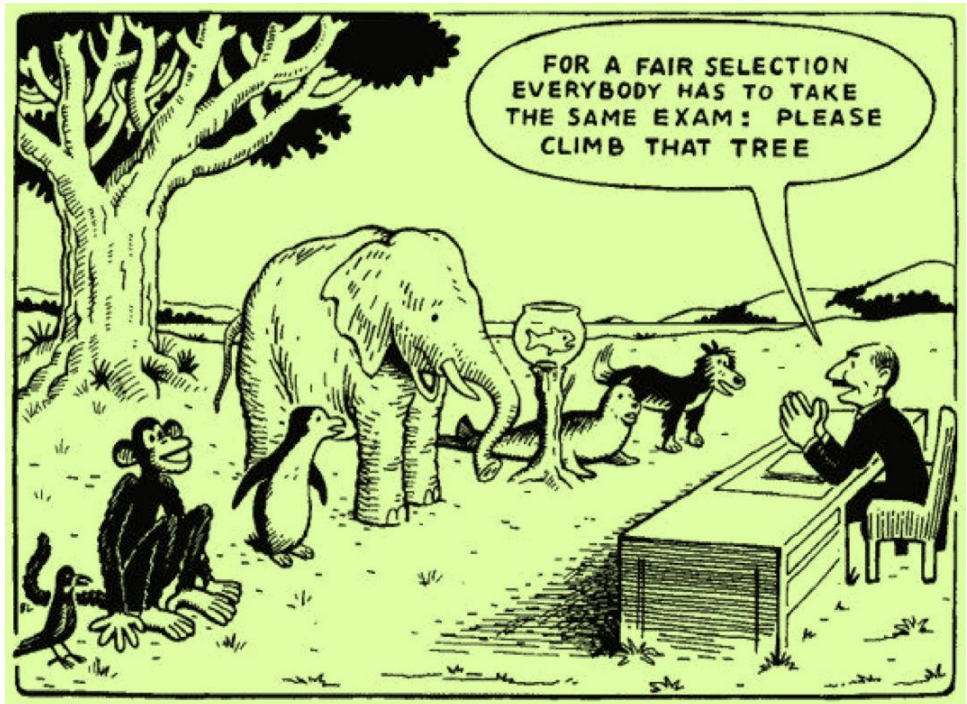
an indicator of the academic worthiness of a person's publications. A commonly used tool to determine if your work is being cited by others is a citation index (such as the Web of Science) and, of course, the internet itself (e.g. Google Scholar).

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.

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.

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>

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

SECTION TWO

The Road to Tenure: Understanding the Process

Anna M. Ortiz, Don Haviland **and** Laura Henriques October 26, 2017

SOURCE: <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2017/10/26/guidance-process-gaining-tenure-essay>

Earning tenure is a multiyear process, and if you are just starting your faculty career, you will want to learn how the review, tenure and promotion, or RTP, process works on your campus. There are two major aspects.

First is the timeline for the submission and review of your documentation. Second are the criteria by which you will be judged. While not a checklist, the criteria indicate the sorts of things you need to achieve by the time you submit your file.

Many times, we focus solely on the criteria, as they can be viewed somewhat like a to-do list, and checking off items brings us comfort. Losing track of the timeline, however, can have dire consequences, so you should be mindful of both.

The Timeline

The process includes two different types of reviews: formative check-in reviews and summative decision points. Some universities also require you to write during your first or second year a professional development plan covering goals for your first six years. In addition to helping you chart out milestones for scholarly and creative work, grant submissions, and teaching and service obligations, you can create your own timeline to keep you on track for earning tenure. (If your campus does not require you to do this, make yourself do it.)

Early-career faculty members have multiple formative reviews. In many cases, the required documentation for such evaluations is less onerous than for the summative reviews. You might submit an updated CV and short narrative without any of the artifacts to back up your claims. Alternatively, you might submit artifacts associated with the past year or review period.

No employment decisions are made as a result of these reviews, but they are important because of the feedback you receive. The committees reviewing your file during these lower-stakes reviews should comment on your progress toward meeting tenure expectations and give you guidance on what to do to be successful.

Your summative reviews will likely come in year three (retention or reappointment) and year six (tenure and promotion). Year three will likely bring a reappointment decision -- whether to retain you and for how many years -- while year six typically involves tenure and promotion decisions. At each summative stage, you submit a file, usually much more extensive than for formative reviews, and your file is reviewed. The reappointment or retention review is followed by additional formative assessment reviews before the tenure and promotion decision.

If you have been awarded service credit, your timeline will be compressed. Service credit is time served in other positions that is applied to your tenure clock, with products developed during that time counting toward tenure. For instance, you might negotiate one year of service credit for a prior position.

Another factor that will influence your timeline is if you opt to temporarily stop the tenure clock -- for family reasons, for instance. Or, in contrast, some of you may decide that you would like to apply for tenure and promotion earlier than required. While the promotion, prestige and pay raise that come with early tenure are tempting, the stakes are high and you should be thoughtful when making that decision.

For formative and summative evaluations, you receive feedback from each committee level of review. Depending on the type of review, the feedback comes from department, college and university committees; your chair; the dean; and even the provost or president. You should bring the feedback home and read it over a cup of tea or glass of wine. The information you receive from the reviews leading up to tenure or promotion should influence what you do moving forward and what you write about in later reviews.

Criteria and Expectations

You should know as much as you can about the evaluation process. First, read and review the policy documents on your campus to understand the formal written guidelines and criteria. Second, consult with your colleagues about their understanding of and experiences with the process.

The RTP criteria and process should be spelled out in department-, college- and university-level policy documents. These documents represent a contract between you and the institution, laying out what you are expected to do in

order to get tenure and promotions. The criteria are not meant to be a surprise. The document's level of specificity varies from department to department and campus to campus. The intent, however, is for you to be evaluated objectively on the evidence you provide that demonstrates you have met the standards of performance in your assigned duties and scholarly and creative endeavors. Knowing what is expected of you helps you plan your first six years as a faculty member.

You should review the policy and document before you accept a job offer. The tenure and promotion guidelines on most campuses are public, and the process should be transparent. RTP documents have guidelines for instructionally related activities, scholarship and service. Pay attention to all three areas.

While we urge you to craft your own career trajectory, do not ignore this document. Just as the timeline for the review process impacts when you might need to accomplish certain tasks, the requirements themselves can help you prioritize activities and efforts.

Here are just a few examples of ways in which deep knowledge of RTP criteria and expectations can help you be strategic:

- Suppose you need to publish four peer-reviewed articles to get tenure. Those articles need to be submitted in sufficient time that they can be reviewed, revised and resubmitted, and perhaps even in print by the time you submit your file for tenure. If your campus requires external evaluation of your file, the deadlines for submitting manuscripts will probably be compressed, because those articles need to be sent to external reviewers. You must plan with this information in mind.
- If your department RTP guidelines indicate that you must publish a book to be tenured, with peer-reviewed articles as enhancements to the file, then you know you must spend time working toward a book contract and release.

Having a well-thought-through plan also helps keep you focused. You will be asked to serve on committees, invited to collaborate on grants and projects, requested to participate in outreach activities, and more. The opportunities might be wonderful and career enhancing, but if they do not align with your career plan, they may pull you away from your goals and keep you from doing the work you must do in order to keep your job.

Understanding institutional context is crucial to deciphering expectations. Minimum expectations for tenure and promotion vary across institution types. If you are at a research-intensive university, expectations for scholarly outputs are greater than if you are at a teaching-intensive university. The emphasis placed on service varies by campus and department as well. Additionally, the level of specificity in the document detailing what is required to earn tenure varies. The intent, however, is for you to be evaluated objectively on the evidence you provide demonstrating you have met the standards of performance in your assigned duties and scholarly and creative endeavors. A careful reading of the RTP document can help guide you.

Recognize also that, whatever the institution, people are rarely promoted and granted tenure for their outstanding service contributions. The balance between teaching and scholarship differs at each campus, but you need to meet minimal standards in both to get tenure. If it is a choice between getting an article or grant submitted and serving on a time-consuming committee, the scholarly work is probably a better choice.

Uncovering Unwritten Expectations

Almost as important as what is written in the RTP guidelines is what is not written. Some of this ambiguity is understandable -- you cannot put every detail in a document -- but some of it is driven by the personal inclinations of senior faculty or administrators or the slow ramping up of expectations over time. While the ambiguity is not ideal, and is frustrating for many early-career faculty members, it may be the situation within which you must work.

In addition to reading the document, you also need to gauge the culture of your department and campus. This is where talking with your colleagues can be invaluable. As you think about whom to talk with, we recommend respected senior colleagues in your department, colleagues who have recently served on RTP committees and department colleagues who are slightly ahead of you in the process. Colleagues outside your department, college or school are generally less useful, as expectations may vary considerably. Senior colleagues who have not served on an RTP committee or who received tenure long ago are also less useful, as they are less likely to be familiar with current expectations, so you should talk with a variety of people.

Pick their brains about what counts, what is important and where you can best put your energy. However, always recognize that your faculty colleagues do not know your entire story or your complete file. When they compliment you and say you are a slam dunk for earning tenure, they do so with good intentions and incomplete information. While nice to hear, it may not be reliable feedback. Therefore, talk with them, listen to them, but corroborate your understanding by checking with lots of colleagues in your department, including your department chair.

It's important to uncover unspoken expectations related to teaching, research and service. Here are some examples of questions that might not be addressed explicitly in the RTP policy but could have some bearing on your experience.

- If peer-reviewed research articles are required, must one (or more) be in a certain type of journal, or is any peer-reviewed publication acceptable?
- Must you be sole author on articles? If you collaborate, how important is lead authorship?
- Should you be co-authoring with students?
- How acceptable are online publications?
- Should you be using data collected in your current position rather than in a graduate student or postdoc role?
- Must your instructor evaluation ratings be excellent, merely close to the department mean, or show growth over time?
- Is experimenting with new pedagogies and strategies in your courses encouraged, or should you be more conservative before tenure?
- Where should you focus your service work for retention and, after that, for promotion and tenure? Do you need service work at all three levels (department, college and university)?
- How is consulting work reported and counted?

By following these recommendations, you'll be in a better place to chart your next steps.

In a follow-up article, we will describe how to create the reappointment, tenure or promotion file that shows your best work.

-----**Comment**

[Helen](#)

This is an excellent article that provides practical advice. Follow it, and you will enhance your chance of earning tenure and shield yourself from the damage if you don't.

Super-important caveat regarding institutional culture: those going up for tenure at times of leadership transitions are especially vulnerable. New department chairs, deans, provosts, and presidents like to use tenure decisions to make statements and to free salary lines for department/division/institutional transformation. Prior cases may not be instructive regarding the unwritten rules. That is why they are unwritten-so that maximal flexibility is afforded the institutional leaders. I don't object to that in principle. But in practice it is often ugly.

My sense is that the written/unwritten balance varies along the public/private axis. Public institutions need more transparency.

Remember this: tenure denial doesn't destroy lives and careers, but the accompanying failure narrative does. Avoid internalization of the failure narrative and you'll be fine.

SECTION THREE

Documenting Your Career for Success

[Anna M. Ortiz](#), [Don Haviland](#) and [Laura Henriques](#) November 2, 2017

SOURCE: <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2017/11/02/how-create-strong-reappointment-tenure-or-promotion-file>

Last week [we reviewed](#) the reappointment, tenure and promotion process. In this article, we will discuss strategies for assembling your file for it.

The typical file should include a copy of your CV, a narrative and documents providing evidence of your accomplishments in the three areas of faculty work: teaching, research and scholarship, and service. Those three components of the file should be tightly integrated to tell a compelling story about your accomplishments.

For some of us, the idea of putting together a file of our accomplishments feels like bragging and is an uncomfortable task. Doing so may even bring forward the feelings of being an impostor: we may feel like the accomplishments you describe are not really ours, that others will not believe us or that what we did will not be good enough.

Others of us might not trust the process. Such feelings may cause us to document every single thing we have done in our professional life, resulting in an unbearably large file. Such a file taxes us and the committees that review it and can result in high-quality work getting lost in the mix with less valuable efforts and contributions. We encourage you to fight that temptation.

You should build a file that shows your best work. To do so, you should focus your efforts on the CV, the narrative and specific components of that narrative.

The CV

Your CV is like the overview or broad catalog of your accomplishments in your current and perhaps prior roles. You should be updating it often, so it should take little energy at this stage to include it in your file. Your campus may ask you to make it clear which activities you completed during the review period (e.g., since you arrived on the campus or during the last three years). Even if it is not a requirement, clearly delineating the entries under review is helpful to your review committee and decreases the impression that you are trying to get credit for things that are not covered.

The Narrative

The narrative provides the readers with an understanding of your professional work that a CV alone cannot do. You write about your teaching philosophy, scholarly and creative agenda, and service in your narrative. You explain how and why you made the professional decisions you have, how your line of inquiry fits into the broader discipline, and how you are crafting your career. That is, you should show reviewers that you have a scholarly agenda or research agenda.

As you lay out your story, the committee can see that you have an overall plan as a teacher or that you are doing more than just cranking out the required number of papers or projects in a haphazard fashion that might end as soon as you are granted tenure. A good narrative tells a story and shows the reviewers how you are thoughtfully crafting your career even as you lay out the case for meeting their expectations for tenure and life beyond it.

Your narrative should be written for intelligent readers but not filled with jargon or insider language. Remember that most of your readers will be outside your discipline, so you probably need to educate them via the narrative. Part of your task when writing your narrative will be to position your accomplishments within a larger context. For example, what distinct contributions are you making to the scholarship? Why you are selecting particular pedagogies? There may be page limits on this narrative, so know that you cannot write about everything. Whatever you write, however, should be tightly integrated with the exhibits you provide as evidence.

Writing the narrative is challenging. Some of us have a hard time tooting our own horn. Our advice: do not write about yourself; write about the work.

As you put together the narrative, pay attention to two documents: the guidelines and the form the committees must fill out after reviewing your file. Anything you can do to organize your narrative in ways that help the committee fill out their form, the better.

We encourage you to organize your narrative sections around the main categories by which you will be reviewed. For instance, you might have a section on instruction, with subsections related to teaching philosophy, approach and strategies, and student response. Structuring your narrative and your evidence files in this way helps you be organized and helps the reviewing committees with their work, which often leads to a much happier committee.

Using language from the policy can also enable you to show how you have met certain criteria. For example, when writing about your scholarly efforts, you might say, “The department document requires faculty to have three peer-reviewed articles and at least one conference paper/poster/presentation every other year. In this past review period, I have published four peer-reviewed articles and presented seven times.”

Be transparent and make a case for how each component fits in a particular part of faculty work. While some activities might address two or three of the primary areas (e.g., a service-learning course fits into instructionally related activities and service), you need to decide if you want to use this as an example of your teaching efforts or service, or both, and then explain carefully. For example, in the case of a service-learning course, the teaching strategies and course structure are part of instruction and teaching, while the connections and outreach to the community might be service.

If you are using the same activity as evidence for both teaching and service, be sure to delineate how distinct aspects of the work fit each category.

Do not try to count the same parts of the work for two different areas. You want to be efficient and find ways to describe synergies in your work, but you do not want to give the appearance of double-dipping

If prior reviewing committees have done a good job, you will have received actionable feedback (e.g., do less service, adjust a particular aspect of teaching, get a publication that includes student co-authors, submit a grant proposal). Look at the things you are doing well and celebrate them. Then pause and look at the feedback that identifies areas for improvement. It is in your best interest to respond to it both in action and in the narrative for your next review round. Doing so allows you to showcase how you have tried to improve.

Be explicit about this. For example, you might say, “In my third-year review, the departmental committee indicated that I needed to work more on providing feedback to students. I have attempted to do this by ...” If you choose not to act on recommendations from earlier reviews, make a case for why you did not.

Specific Narrative Components

In the narrative, you should explicitly make the connection between your teaching philosophy and what you actually do in classes, how you plan for classes and how you shape assessments and use assessment data to inform your practice. Consider addressing questions such as:

- How does your instructional philosophy impact your instructional decisions?
- What evidence do you have beyond a syllabus, course exams, end-of-course grade distributions and student evaluations that showcases your accomplishments and growth as a teacher?
- What sorts of feedback do you provide to students? How do you know if it works?
- How are assessments aligned with the course’s student learning outcomes, and how have you used assessment data to inform your practice?
- What sorts of professional learning opportunities related to teaching have you attended? What impact have they had?
- If your course has changed, can you document this via changes to syllabi and assignments? What is the rationale for those changes?
- Have you tried something new and had unfavorable results? (Own it, talk about what you changed -- and why -- and explain what you are continuing to change to improve instruction.)

You should provide clarification in your narrative whenever questions arise about a publishing venue or authorship. Online and open-access journals are increasingly prevalent. However, reviewers are unlikely to know which are peer reviewed and high-quality or pay-to-publish sorts of journals of questionable merit. Gathering data such as impact factor, journal acceptance rates and the like -- and providing the sources of that information within your narrative -- helps your reviewers make informed evaluations of your work.

If you collaborate with others, we suggest getting letters from co-authors indicating the level of your contributions. This is imperative if all of your published work is multiauthored or the pieces you are citing as having met the minimum criteria are collaborative endeavors. The committee wants to know that you made a substantive contribution to the work. Letters from collaborators indicating your contributions (and theirs) help substantiate claims you make in your narrative. Any time you make the review committee guess, it increases the chance for misinterpretation.

As with the other sections of your narrative, you set the context in discussing service. If you made strategic decisions for how your service fits into a larger plan, describe those decisions. For instance, perhaps you wanted to learn about curriculum development and how to propose a new course, so you joined the department curriculum committee. If you were an opportunistic service provider (i.e., you served on a committee because it was required to keep your job), do not turn it into something it was not. A committee where all you did was count votes once per semester or you were a marshal at graduation is a smaller level of commitment and work than chairing a committee. Remember that your colleagues are reviewing your file and they are familiar with many of the service opportunities. Exaggerating service contributions can cause reviewers to wonder what else you are exaggerating.

Compiling Your Evidence

You may have limitations on how much evidence you can include. Being judicious in what you include increases the amount of time reviewers spend on the good stuff. So how do you decide?

First, your campus may require certain artifacts: course syllabi, sample assessments, student work samples, summaries of student evaluation results. Obviously, include the required elements. Then check with colleagues to know what is expected and typically included. Asking to see the files of those who are just ahead of you in the process is a great way to get ideas both for evidence to include and how to organize your file.

Second, be sure that your evidence is tightly integrated with your narrative so that readers can see and read both in parallel. Creating a clear, easy-to-navigate file makes it easier for the reviewing committees to read and evaluate your information.

It is better to include fewer high-quality artifacts than a large number of insignificant artifacts mixed in with the high-quality ones. Remember that your goal is to provide evidence that demonstrates how you have met or exceeded the requirements for retention, tenure or promotion, so choose your evidence accordingly.

Survive and Thrive

As efficient and effective as we hope these tips are, maintaining, compiling and submitting your file is still a stressful process. The logistics alone are challenging. Then add the ambiguity of the process, self-doubt that arises and general angst about preparation for and the process of review. With those factors in mind, we offer the following reminders and suggestions:

- Seek allies. See if those who are at or near the same career stage would share their files with you, allowing you to see what they included, how long their file was and so on. Keep in mind that guidelines may vary and that no two files are alike, but seeing someone else's can be helpful as you think about what yours should look like. Find a colleague, read each other's narrative drafts and provide feedback. Look at each other's evidence. Doing so with people outside your department can also be helpful; if they can understand what you wrote, so will committee members outside your department.
- Reach out to your peer network. Your graduate school friends are on the same timeline as you. Are you still close to your graduate adviser? These people know you better than most. They have seen how you survived the dissertation process, so they may have some suggestions to help you live through this process, too.
- Write about the work, not about yourself. One of us got this advice when writing our file, and it made the process of writing easier. It is about the product and process, not about you as an individual.
- Take your time. Do not try to compile materials or write the entire narrative at once. Work methodically and in brief regular sessions, just like you would on teaching and scholarship. Work on sections and come back to the project over time. Done this way, it is actually kind of cool to see all that you have accomplished.

Finally, know that the process should not dictate your life and all your academic decisions. You certainly cannot ignore the requirements for gaining tenure, but you want to chart your academic pathway to be more than just meeting a checklist. You are building a career that will be significantly longer than six years, so map out a plan that will have you being productively engaged in a course of action that makes you happy while meeting your institution's guidelines. The file that you put together is just a way of sharing that story with others.

SECTION FOUR

The Pursuit of Tenure: One View from the Trenches

Surviving Institutional Racism in Academe

A faculty member describes some of the lessons she's learned the hard way.

By [Anonymous](#) November 17, 2017

SOURCE: <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2017/11/17/faculty-member-offers-lessons-shes-learned-about-institutional-racism-essay>

Readers, I will be honest with you: when I accepted my first tenure-track position, I was excited to formally join the academy. I naïvely assumed the bubble of academe would insulate me from, well, *everything*. I raced toward my Ph.D. in search of social protection, professional stability and financial freedom. Instead, I found early-career emotional, physical and mental exhaustion.

Upon joining the professoriate, I thought I was joining a group of people committed to a similar end goal. I imagined college faculty members as collective change agents transforming the lives of future generations. I was wrong. Colleges as manufacturing plants for little liberal soldiers is a fairy tale created by political conservatives to reconstruct [classism](#) around education rather than political affiliation. I have found few liberal “havens” in academic spaces, and I am not sure that there is a happy ending here.

I am sure none of what follows is unique to my experiences as a black woman faculty member at a HWCU (or [historically white college or university](#)). The ordinary nature of racism in the academy encourages its growth where it seemed, to me, least likely. A small segment of faculty of color experience extreme harassment, receiving [death threats](#) and sometimes [termination](#) for their public discussions of white supremacy and privilege. Most of us, instead, experience professional death by a thousand cuts. We spend our days ducking microaggressions, [hurdling stereotypes](#) and navigating emotional distress. Most of us will be denied tenure, and many will be too exhausted to protest if we managed to land a tenure-track job at all.

When I went to work mobilizing support for change, I had no idea the toll institutional racism in this setting and academe more generally would take on my physical health, my spirit and my passion for educating. I led poorly attended workshops on “othering” in the classroom. I proposed noncomparative research on black student communities, but reviewers suggested white subjects were imperative to create valid data. I came to the academy to create platforms for change. Instead I found an institution where skepticism permeates discussions of inequality and willful ignorance of prejudicial rhetoric perpetuates discrimination.

Here are some lessons about surviving academe’s institutionalized racism that I have learned the hard way.

The job of a professor is physical work. In graduate school, I rarely heard discussions of the physicality of academe. I did not expect to feel the work so viscerally. The constant tension is a byproduct of the inherent conundrum of my role on the campus. I am expected to exert power where it is not assumed. Fellow faculty and administrators challenge my fit while also thrusting me into the limelight. Students test my steadfastness and institutional authority.

My body language is constantly surveilled and therefore must be managed. “Stand taller, take up space, remember you belong here” is a mantra I repeat often to myself. Tenure won’t change this, and publications won’t, either. A short critical comment in faculty meeting requires brute force to momentarily pause my shaking hands as I stand to address fellow faculty. There is no alternative action in this example. To allow my hands to shake would undermine the little power I’ve amassed, but the physical exhaustion I feel afterward is palpable.

You cannot always be the counselor. The impact of white supremacy on campus is often silent in its devastation. Coupled with low levels of student trust in faculty and staff, marginalized students have few spaces where they can speak openly and without fear of recourse. So I opened my door. I let students unload their experiences on me, but it is difficult to maintain emotional distance when we are angry about the same things. What would you tell a black student who has to attend class with a peer who yelled racist epithets at them last weekend, or a survivor who has to eat in the same dining hall as their rapist? I [listened](#) to them, tried to console them, to temper the anxiety and frustration plaguing them. I met with anyone with institutional power to plead my case. I lost sleep, I cried. I want to give these students a voice but almost lost mine in the process.

People will try you. I joined the academy because I love to explore, teach and write. I expected to feel at home, but instead of like-minded peers I found antagonists. Instead of solidarity, I found cynicism. I endure affirmative action jokes from white colleagues and passive digs at my inability to “look like a professor.” Students of all races challenge my syllabus, threaten to go “over my head” to their white man professor of choice and reject social inequality discussions in the classroom.

Administrators are happy to use my efforts to promote institutional diversity initiatives but routinely ignore my recommendations for effective structural and cultural change. They ask: Why are you so sensitive? Perhaps it wasn’t their intention to offend you? Who else corroborates your story? What could you have done differently? Have you reviewed the institutional policy on this topic? Perhaps you should discuss with unreachable person X. Many students and staff members regard me as a member of the liberal elite pushing overwrought theories of social inequity on the next generation. I am an outsider. Therefore I can be openly challenged, admonished and ignored at the whim of those around me.

You are not alone. I dreamed of rallying a group of like-minded thinkers to the same table so that we could make a plan to save the world. But that never happened. At first, my colleagues were happy to help champion issues of marginalization on campus, especially when catchy buzzwords were involved. Increase diversity! Improve inclusivity! But the excitement faded quickly in the face of constant administrative resistance. I also found it difficult to use cultural support, once a dependable savior, as a scaffold. I thought myself a burden to those struggling through their own fatigue. I watched from the outside for too long, wondering if other marginalized faculty felt similarly alone and disappointed. I wish I had known sooner that they did.

You can decide your success. I would love to be awarded tenure when the time comes, and I would like to publish social justice research in peer-reviewed journals, but I realize now that may not be my path. The difficulty to produce in this environment, to maintain creativity amid the emotional, physical and psychological strain of this job, cannot be overstated. I have dedicated hundreds of hours to improving the academic experiences of the marginalized at my institution. It hasn’t made a difference, but I will not stop fighting.

Instead, I stopped using institutional change as a marker of success. I prioritize my stability, health and happiness. I don’t need to create a more liberal environment to experience success. Sometimes a day maintaining collegiality far above what I receive is success. Continuing to raise my voice is success. Providing support for those who need it, even when it is difficult to find myself, is success. And most days that’s enough, for now.