UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE
ADVANCE INSTITUTE

What's Next? Navigating Promotion from Associate to Full Professor: Experiences of UD Faculty
November 18, 2021

UD ADVANCE hosted a panel discussion featuring UD faculty sharing their perspectives and strategies on the promotion to full professor. Participant questions and panelist answers are summarized below.

Panelists:

Robin Andreasen, Professor, Department of Linguistics and Cognitive Science, UD ADVANCE Co-PI
Andrea Everard, Professor of MIS, Director, MS in Business Analytics and Information Management, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Programs
Jill Flynn, Professor, Department of English (CT)
Holly Michael, Professor, Department of Earth Sciences, Director, Delaware Environmental Institute
Dr. Laura Salsini, Professor, Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures

Questions & Answers

1) *Why should faculty seek promotion to full professor? What might be holding them back?*
   - There are a range of professional benefits, such as political influence. Administrative positions or membership on influential committees may be restricted to full professors. There is also greater opportunity to turn a scholarly lens to new research topics.
   - Financial benefits include higher minimum salary, promotion increases by rank, and increased overload compensation.
   - Representation matters. Women make up an increasing share of Assistant and Associate Professors, but women remain underrepresented at the Full Professor rank
   - The literature suggests several reasons people may not choose to seek promotion. They may be exhausted from the promotion and/or tenure process. Some are saddled with administrative tasks or have taken on additional "caregiving" towards students. Finally, some faculty experience inconsistent feedback from chairs and deans.

2) *What are the general differences between promotion to full vs. associate?*
   - For promotion to associate, you need to show great potential and productivity. At the full level, you're established and well known in your field, with an international reputation.
   - Tenure is based mainly on research. For going up for full, the criteria are broader, including service to the profession and administrative duties.
   - Networking is very important. You never know who your letter writers will be.

3) *How many years, on average, do faculty stay at the Associate rank before going up for Full?*
   - There is much variation. Many people aim for going up after 6-7 years, but it depends on your field. Panelists noted that it should be when the person felt they were "ready".
   - Service, family commitments, administrative duties, health challenges, all can influence things. Make sure your dossier is honest about why you took that time scale. But highlight the positive.
   - Some panelists felt it could be more detrimental to go up too early, versus waiting for the typical time range.

4) *How do I decide if it's the right time to apply for promotion?*

- Get lots of different advice. Within your department, talk to senior colleagues and your chair. Find mentors who have been on P&T committees at various levels; ask them to look at your CV and give feedback.
- Connect with other colleagues external to UD. When it comes to feedback from faculty outside of the university, networking is important. Go to workshops and panel discussions. Seek out mentoring opportunities.
- Listen to senior faculty in your department. If you're being cautious and they're saying you're ready, think about going up. If they identify gaps, think about how to address them and create a timeline for getting there.
- Continually think about your own long-term career goals. Say no to the things that aren't taking you in the direction you want to go and seek out other opportunities. You can use your mentors (peer mentors, formal mentors) to help with this process.

5) *Do you only get one shot at promotion to full professor, or are there cases where faculty have had multiple attempts?*
   - Yes, you can seek promotion to full professor multiple times. There are cases here at UD where faculty have gone up for promotion to full professor more than once.

6) *Is there a requirement to have an international reputation in your field to be promoted to full professor? What does this entail?*
   - Influence at the international level will vary depending on the respective field, and/or department.
   - Some ideas for building this reputation include being invited to international conferences as a keynote speaker or establishing international research collaborations.

7) *What resources did you use to prepare for your promotion? Do you have advice as to what should be included in the dossier?*
   - It's important to be familiar with formal and informal department standards, as well as university standards and practices. Read these documents.
   - Ask for feedback from senior faculty colleagues, both within your department/college and outside of it. ADVANCE also has senior faculty who are willing to meet with you and provide resources.
   - It is appropriate to ask colleagues to see their dossiers, even if your work is different. You can see the variety of ways people represent their work.
   - The dossier should be a narrative that tells your story; it should tie together your research, teaching, and service in a way that describes who you are. Don't sell yourself short; highlight what you're good at.
   - If you have a nontraditional workload, you may need to be creative to tell your story in a way that your evaluators will understand. Your committee chair needs to write a good letter to communicate to external letter writers how your workload differs from standard.
   - You will need a COVID impact statement, see Promotion and Tenure Information for Candidates and Reviewers on the Faculty Affairs website.

8) *How do you handle change in your research due to equipment failures, COVID impacts, or other factors?*
   - If you had an interruption in your work, focus on positive trajectory. How did you get creative and address these challenges? Demonstrate trajectory and forward movement.

9) *How do you go about selecting potential letter writers?*
   - This can be a confusing process, so get conversation going in your department so that everyone knows what the process looks like. Do this early, so it's standardized.

- International letter writers can be helpful, but this varies by field. Carefully consider these letter writers, as culture of promotion and letter writing varies by country. Some departments purposely don't ask for letters from international letter writers, as these may not fit US standards and could be damaging to candidates.

10) *What if you get conflicting advice from mentors, post-tenure peer review, etc. Or what if what colleagues and mentors say is different from what actual P&T Committees do?*
    - If people don't follow the P&T guidelines, talk to the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs. There are multiple levels of review, so you can also seek out help at the college and university levels.
    - Look carefully at your departmental documents. Committees need to follow these.
    - Some departments have very vague documents. Talk to lots of colleagues to understand their varied perspectives.

11) *Can you speak to what goes on in the room during these votes? Can the person going up for promotion kindly request that X or Y colleague is not on one's committees?*
    - You can raise concerns about a colleague's objectivity, but candidates cannot bar colleagues from serving on departmental P&T committees.
    - The make-up of the voting committee is determined by each respective department/College. Some departments require that all Full Professors are on the committee, while others have a designated committee comprised of faculty holding various ranks.

12) *How is promotion different for CT faculty? Who is voting if there are not any CT full professors in your department, and can there be bias?*
    - Many other universities don't have a comparable position, so external letter writers need to know what CT means at UD. Your committee chair should assist with this.
    - You should demonstrate excellence in teaching beyond your own classroom. This may be research on teaching, or service around teaching, such as for national associations.
    - When it comes to reputation, you can demonstrate a larger reputation in teaching through conference presentations and scholarship in teaching.
    - As far as who is voting and potential bias, it helps if departmental documents are very clear. Check your department and college documents to see if there are rules in place for this. Tie your work back to your departmental documents as clearly as possible in your dossier. Letter writers also matter in this process. Overall, there are structures in place to try to correct biases that occur, through various levels of review.
    - You can bring in the CT Caucus for advice in this process.
    - Use CTAL as a resource. They do consultations, offer dossier advice, and can observe your teaching.

13) *How has your balance of research, teaching, and service shifted since becoming full professor?*
    - Again, there is considerable variation among panelists. Several mentioned additional administrative responsibilities and departmental service. Workload can be adjusted, including a reduction in teaching load to reflect additional service. Some panelists have experienced less time for research due to service and administrative work.

Additional Resources

UD offers a range of resources to help faculty navigate the promotion process. UD ADVANCE hosts annual P&T panels and has compiled multiple resources on promotion and tenure on their website. The CT Caucus website their own P&T workshop annually. CTAL also holds an annual event on documenting teaching effectiveness for promotion and tenure.

UD holds an institutional membership with NCFDD, which offers a range of webinars and resources.

UD ACHIEVE is a local resource that build off the NCFDD to offer small group mentoring, a write-on-site program, and other events.