Tenure & Promotion

“How to Get There”
Tenure

- Tenure is a major academic step.
- In its present meaning, the granting of tenure is an institution’s endorsement of your academic stature.
- At the UA FOMD, there are two assistant professor probation periods:
  - First Probation period: 4 years
  - Second probation period: 2 years
- Success in obtaining tenure means automatic promotion to associate professor are linked.
Application for Tenure

• Generally faculty apply for tenure starting at the end of the 5th of their 6 years, so that the application is “processed” in the 6th year.

• Exceptions (delay in application) might include medical or parental leave, major changes in job descriptions or other extra-ordinary circumstances.

• And early application for tenure? Although it is possible to apply for tenure at any time after the end of the first probationary period (4 years), one should weigh the value of early application carefully—you only get one opportunity to apply for tenure and if unsuccessful you must leave the academic track!
What if you want to make a major change to your job description?

- *This is never done lightly*, and at the level of an assistant professor, unlikely to be changed more than once. For major changes (that is changes in proportionality of a magnitude that would re-define your role in the faculty) there must be compelling reasons, with which your chair is in accord.

- You must be 1 year or more into new job description before you can be judged on the basis of the new proportionality. Otherwise one is assessed on the basis of original job description.

- If a job description has been changed proximate to the time one must apply for tenure, chairs may ask for an extension to the probationary period in order for the member to “perform” for a longer period in the new job description.
Success in Academic Medicine

All successful academic careers have variable mix:

- **Job description:**
  - Education
  - Research
  - Clinical
  - Administration

- **Scholarship:**
  - Teaching
  - Application
  - Integration
  - Discovery
  - Methodology
  - Peer-review
  - Dissemination
Your major contributions will be assessed through the lens of scholarship (components of which are displayed above) and by the degree to which the contributions and activities align with your job description and the overall goals of the faculty.
Keys to success:

*Nosce te ipsum*

- It is therefore critical that you know and align with your job description.
- Hard work alone is NOT necessarily α the likelihood of promotion
- Ensure that your activities and productivities
  - Reflect your career goals
  - Remain aligned with job description
  - Have scholarship = standard (in all domains)
  - Evidence of recognition (national/international)
Staying on track

- Plan carefully  Reassess often  Ask for advice
- Get a mentor
- Profit from your annual review by DD and chair by being prepared and committed to action on the basis of feedback received.
- Undertake an academic evaluation (preferably 2-3 years before application for tenure) so that you have time to act on constructive feedback and advice. Many departments now offer these assessment reviews (through Academic evaluation committees) and the Faculty recommends that all departments and free standing divisions offer some facsimile to their faculty to align and prepare for promotion.
DOCUMENTATION: Getting started in the application for tenure and promotion

• Start *early*

• If you have not already done so have your material internally reviewed by a mentor, divisional director, chair, or committee as previously discussed.

• Ask around and obtain sample documentation (“promotion packages”) from successful senior colleagues to help you in effectively reporting your contributions.
Supporting Documentation is Critical

Most of those deciding on your promotion don’t know you. Your submitted “package” will include:

- Narrative letter of accomplishments
- Curriculum vitae
  - Research
  - Teaching
  - Clinical
  - Administrative
- Education Dossier
- Clinical Dossier
- Supporting letter from Chair/DD
- Referee letters
- 5 best papers (if Research > 30% or basis of tenure)
Narrative Letter: Do’s

• Provide sufficient detail to justify promotion (4-5 pages)

• Start with your job description
• Start with your major portfolio and work downward

• Outline your accomplishments under headings
  (Education, Research, Clinical care, Administration)

• Describe all your achievements
• Highlight scope and impact of achievements (national international etc) These may be obvious to you but not necessarily to those reviewing your application.
Narrative Letter: Don’ts

• Self-efface, embellish, or “pad”.

• Engage in emotionalism or defensive posturing.

• Emphasize limitations (lack of resources or protected time/uncooperative DD).

• Regardless of circumstances such writing never reads well, can be seen as inappropriate by others, and is counterproductive for you.
Clinical Contributions

• These can include clinics, ward duties, or in some instances clinical care that does not involve direct or “face-to-face” encounters with patients.

• Being a good doctor is expected of all clinicians, but clinical awards, peer and societal recognition, and leadership roles can be reported.

• If you describe any of your activities or contributions as innovative you should provide evidence to justify this. Innovation comes from “Innovare: to renew” and rather than using scholarship of discovery, it employs the scholarship of integration and application. For example it may be assessed (and planned!) using the following criteria:

  What is the role of the individual in this innovation?
  What is the nature of innovation being introduced?
  How is the innovation being promoted disseminated?

  What is the quality of methods used for integration and application of this innovation?
  Explicit identification of desired outcomes linked to goals and objectives?
  Is it appropriate to goals and objectives of our Faculty?
  Is there adequate preparation & review of existing knowledge and experience, identification of potential adopters, and barriers uptake and use?
  Is there evidence of reflective critique and peer review in process?
  Is it described in enough detail to “guide” reproducibility.

  How will the success or impact of the innovation be assessed and evaluated?
  Actual outcome measures
  Kirkpatrick’s levels
  What is the evidence for uptake and use by others?
  What is the scope of this effect? Size/range/locations of group being affected?
Pearls and Pitfalls of Preparation

- For clarity, SEPARATE Peer reviewed from non-peer reviewed manuscripts and abstracts

- EXCLUDE “papers in preparation”, grants submitted...as these are promissory rather than actual

- DO NOT duplicate presentations & oral abstracts

- Only **Judicious** inclusion of non-academic activity, such as volunteer/community work that is related to your area of expertise
### Pearls & Pitfalls: Emphasis & context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2007 I.P. Nitely Urology Awardee</th>
<th>Conferred annually to only one faculty member in Canada following a national search.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009 Course Supervisor (Neurology)</td>
<td>Developed and edited entirely new 200 page syllabus rated 4.8/5.0 by student evaluation. This forms the template for neurology teaching at the U of C and University of Alberta</td>
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Those reading your submission may not know a great deal about your professional area. Qualify and clarify anything worth entering—especially large “product or process "contributions, awards and recognition. In these examples, without “column two” the reader may not appreciate the importance of the award and the contribution.
Pearls and Pitfalls: Be Objective

If you are “missing” records of student evaluations, ask Course Directors or the UME/PME office to provide them.

- If you are involved in teaching for which no “formal” system of evaluation is present, administer your own using standard questionnaires. These can be collated by an administrative assistant to maintain anonymity.
- There are peer consultation programs available for having your teaching “peer-reviewed” as well.

For more information on these activities, contact: Bruce.fisher@ualberta.ca
Referees

- For application for tenure and promotion to assistant professor, you are required to provide 5 letters from referees*
  - 2 internal
  - 3 external to University
    - You chose 1
    - Your chair chooses 2
      - When possible they will have had no *mentoring* experience with you

- FEC considers All responses received by your Chair
- Generally referees should be above your rank in a tenure or academic track
Referees: How to get them

- Attend Canadian meetings
- Ask questions (especially poster sessions)
- Attend meetings of scientific society
- Frequent presentations
- Serve on committees/council
- Review abstracts/manuscripts
Referees: Choosing wisely

- Referees should be familiar with and supportive of your accomplishments
- Choose referees after discussion with mentor/DD/Chair
- Speak personally to chosen referees
- Prestige matters
Chair’s/DD Letter

• It is very important letter. It is seen as document of assessment written by a leader “closest” to the applicant, who knows the applicant’s contributions, progress, and trajectory in depth.

• Chairs can highlight some of your accomplishments that may not be obvious to others.

• Through your preparation and submitted documents, help your chair to put YOUR accomplishments in the best contexts. Do this by being clear, objective and thoughtful when writing your letter and other materials.
Summary

• Plan ahead

• Job description and alignment

• Documentation matters!

• Be objective and use benchmarks when possible

• Develop lifelong colleagues who can act as referees

• Choose referees wisely