

JSEAS Kick-Off Meeting Notes
Thursday, September 24, 2015

TENURE DISCUSSION

Dean Aaron Bobick

- Tenure is an objective assessment of a subjective process
- Plans to impart a set of processes, aligned with top universities, to gain some uniformity across departments
- Moving forward, these processes will be well-specified
- Tenure considers Research, Teaching, and Service
 - Funding is necessary in most cases to publish. If you're not getting funded, either you have (1) trouble communicating your message/work or (2) reviewers are concerned about the impact of your work. It is difficult for those outside of your field to tease those two different reasons apart.
 - Teaching matters. Be a good teacher and seek help if you need it. But be careful about how much time you dedicate to the classroom; it would be difficult for SEAS to grant tenure to someone who is a good teacher but an unrecognized researcher.
 - Service may be:
 - internal with the department
 - external and on a national scale (e.g., workshop chair, associate editor on a journal, program chair)
- Questions a young faculty member should ask himself/herself:
 - Is my work influencing the way of thinking in my field?
 - What evidence do I have that I influence my field? That my work matters?
 - How can I demonstrate that people trying to advance a research agenda believe in me?
 - Are you collaborating on grants with senior PIs?
 - What is my h-index? (one way to document what you do)
 - It is possible to publish a lot and not matter much, but it is difficult to matter and not publish
 - Publication gets your important work exposed
 - Quality, not quantity. And citations are one way of demonstrating quality
- Advice
 - You will need to produce a list of letter writers.
 - Not all of the letter writers on your list will be asked
 - Letters will remain confidential, even if you get tenure
 - Plan a seminar/talk tour during your 5th year at places where letter writers are and/or invite them to give a seminar at WU and make sure they see your lab and your work.
 - Diversify your funding portfolio, especially if the typical, primary source (e.g. NSF) is a very low hit rate.
 - Entrepreneurial efforts need to be evaluated very carefully while you are trying to get tenure.
 - There is zero interest if they are simply for-profit ventures
 - Some interest if they are highly innovative
 - Patents do not generally count as publications
 - Put yourself in the shoes of the evaluators: are you influential in your field?
 - Focus on publishing research as senior/corresponding author. Evaluation focuses on your research as a faculty member (not as a student or postdoc).
 - Give invited keynote lectures. They matter because they show that people who control conferences believe that their attendees will be interested in what you say.
- Mid-tenure review – Spring of 3rd year
 - Where are you? What should you focus on?
 - Internal review:
 - Teaching
 - Research
 - CV
 - No external letters

- Senior faculty will be involved and will help if needed.
- Serious feedback to be given by chair; dean will NOT weigh in.
- Forces department to pay attention with the goal of helping faculty improve case before tenure.
- **General timeline: Going up for tenure**
 - April/May
 - Discussion about anyone who might go up next academic year
 - Appoint three-person subcommittee who will put together the case book and create the “committee generated” letter writer list
 - Faculty member produces research statement, teaching statement, and papers (CV) and “candidate supplied” letter writer list
 - Mid-August
 - Letters solicited from both committee and candidate lists
 - October
 - Department vote by Nov. 1
 - Case presented to tenured faculty; vote recorded; chair writes letter of support
 - If vote and letter are negative, case will not likely leave department
 - If supported, case book and chair’s letter presented to school committee who take vote
 - November/December
 - SEAS Promotion & Tenure Committee meeting and vote
 - January
 - Dean makes decision
 - March
 - Provost does due diligence and confers with the Dean
 - Dean presents to Board of Trustees
- Tenure extensions are possible
 - Up to 3 years due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., lab not built, family medical issues)
 - Is there a reason to believe that things will turn around?

OTHER ITEMS

- Plans to mentor Associate Professors
- Plans to look at all faculty mentoring – not uniform across departments
- Next question: when will you get promoted to Full Professor? What are the criteria?

Vice Dean for Research, Shelly Sakiyama-Elbert

- New funding mechanisms sought to diversify the SEAS funding portfolio
- Open to workshop ideas
- Will assist with large research teams and center proposals
- Request PhD recruiting ideas
- Request feedback on faculty mentoring program